WHITE WOMEN, COLOURED MEN

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PREFACE

SOME eight years ago, a trip to Madagascar and East Africa started me on a whole series of travels all over the world. As the accredited representative of leading French newspapers, I was in a position, wherever I went, to pick up the most varied information about the countries which I visited, even when I stayed there only for a short time.

Like all European and American travellers since the war, I was soon struck by the prodigious awakening of the Yellow, Brown and Black races. I realised how important, how complex, how serious from the point of view of our civilisation, is the great struggle, industrial, commercial and financial, which has now taken the place of the ***de facto*** monopoly formerly enjoyed by Powers belonging to the White race. Ever since 1929 a threat to our civilisation has manifested itself in what—pending fresh war or revolution—we call "the depression." I came to appreciate how far this threat is, in fact, not only international, but also ***inter-racial***.

Our export trade; our whole system of life, political, economic and social; our authority in our spheres of colonisation; our material influence and our moral prestige among the so-called "Coloured" peoples—all this struck me as being called in question and put in peril by an immense process of world-wide reorganisation. So much was self-evident; and I was far from being the first to note this process, pregnant with the future fate of our race.

Meanwhile, the interest that people take in dramatic incidents in which women are concerned has long since led me to pay particular attention to cases involving conflict between White women and Coloured men. One such case, in particular, was the killing of an Egyptian prince in London by his wife, a Frenchwoman. The evidence showed that he wanted to reduce her to a state of sheer slavery, and she was acquitted of the charge of murder by a British jury.

Later on, I followed the trail of a new White Slave "round" from Paris and Marseilles to Singapore, Canton and Shanghai. I satisfied myself that this "Road to Shanghai" was supplying White prostitutes belonging to various countries to a clientele mostly made up of Coloured men: Hindus, Malays, Siamese, Indo-Chinese and Chinese.

I found that White women were being hired as prostitutes by Coloured men, regularly kept by Coloured men, or even married to Coloured men. Any number of Coloured men seemed to prefer White women to women of their own race.

This sequence of observations slowly, but surely, gave a meaning in my eyes to various other facts which I had already noted. Inevitably, irresistibly, I finally deduced from them a general formula; and henceforth all my own more definite investigation, all my interrogation of competent witnesses, served only to confirm it.

This formula is as follows:

"***The Coloured peoples have discovered the White woman***."

Once I had arrived at this formula, I realised that it cast a flood of light on a whole aspect—if not, indeed, the essential human basis—of the present crisis in the supremacy of the White race. Hitherto this crisis has been studied without any reference, so far as I am aware, to the White woman's share of responsibility for it, and the world-wide role which the White woman plays in it.

Readers of my book, ***The Road to Shanghai***, will already have found in it some

hint of this new line of approach to the greatest problem of our time. In that book, however, I was primarily concerned with the traffic in White women in Asia, for the benefit of Yellows or at least ***in their presence***, which is so derogatory to the dignity of Europe and America. I referred to my general formula only incidentally.

I now give the title ***White Women***, ***Coloured Men*** to a composite work which makes no claim to complete treatment of this very wide subject. This book contains travel notes, a record of interviews and more or less personal adventures, and finally some reflections on the subject both in its local and its more general bearings. In short, the structure of this book is very similar to that of ***The Road to Shanghai***. Like my earlier book, I wish it to be regarded merely as a kind of preface or note-book. It is no more than a preliminary to the exhaustive, definitive study of this subject which I may some day be privileged to write, or which somebody luckier will write in my place.

Even in this book, however, I believe that I have sketched the outline and indicated the possibilities of such a study; and this, in itself, is a source of satisfaction to me. For I am convinced that we are concerned here with ***one of the greatest metamorphoses which have taken place in human consciousness***, ***possibly ever since the advent of Christianity***, ***and certainly ever since the Reformation***: a metamorphosis heretical, dangerous and sinister. It may even prove a mortal sin. It is, in any case, a tremendously big thing.

Let me repeat my formula and amplify it:

"***The Coloured peoples have discovered the White woman***—as a marvel; as a wonder from the physical, the artistic, the social and even the religious points of view; as an idol worthy of being desired above all else."

I may add that, since my observations, as I have just explained, necessarily led me to this formula, I have had many a painfully anxious moment over it. I have appealed to many an oracle about it, from simple logic to the augurs of sociology. I have sought documentation for it in the works, sacred and profane—including the Bible—which make up our intellectual armoury.

I have found, moreover, that this formula of mine is interpreted in diametrically opposite ways, according to the audience to whom I submit it. Americans, for example, obviously speaking with the most heart-felt sincerity, have told me: "You are making a revelation to us of the most abominable defiance of Divine Will since the time of Eve!" Russians, on the contrary, have burst out laughing and told me: "Why, there is no such thing as ***race***. There is nothing but humanity, which is one and the same all the world over. A White woman is a human being just the same as a Coloured woman; and the man who attracts her is the right man for her, whatever be the colour of his skin."

Both of them—not to speak of the whole range of moderate opinion in between these two extremes—used arguments so persuasive that I was successively shaken from contradictory points of view, and led to wonder whether I was making a mountain out of a mole-hill or, alternatively, whether I was failing to do justice to a cataclysm. So I went back repeatedly over my solid groundwork: in other words, all the personal documentation which I had been able to assemble. I kept on finding fresh angles of interpretation in it—with the result that I have now revised three or four times the faithful records of experience and the deductions drawn from them which make up this book. For I should never publish a book on so important, so burning a subject unless I were at least reasonably sure that my view is sound.

While some passages in this book may interest men of all races and even all opin-

ions, I fear that other passages are likely to displease them. If I may be forgiven for saying so, I cannot help that. My whole object is simply to ***call attention***, to get people interested, to start discussion, while there is perhaps still time to find a remedy for a very great evil, and even change it into a blessing.

A personal word: it is for this reason, modest but compelling, that I sometimes stop short of too categorical a conclusion. It is for this reason that I sometimes adopt a playful or even a jocular tone. This may shock some people in such a connection; but I adopt it in the hope of making this book of mine appeal to the largest possible number of readers in all latitudes: the kind of readers who as yet know little or nothing about the subject, who therefore have no prejudices, and who will wish to be presented with living pictures and then left to draw their own conclusions.

All these minor considerations, and I myself, are dominated by one sentence, like the ***Mene***, ***mene***, ***tekel***, ***upharsin*** written on the wall at Belshazzar's banquet:

Beware, White race! ***The Coloured races have discovered your supreme treasure***, ***the White Woman***!

What are you going to do about it?

H. C.

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PART ONE

THE CASE OF MRS. MASSIE

I

"GIVE me the Japanese dish, Mikayo," I said to my friendly steward.

There was always a specimen of national cooking at dinner on board the Japanese liner which was taking me from Yokohama to the Hawaiian Islands. I preferred this curiously tasty fish, this excellently cooked rice, to the insipid cosmopolitan menu. The ***Toshita Maru*** rivalled the finest French liners otherwise; but not in her cooking.

Mikayo beamed with pride. He murmured, in very good English:

"I know you're interested in our customs, sir. . . . They're staging a play in the third-class to-night. Would you care to see it? . . . I'm taking the part of a geisha."

"You're playing a geisha, Mikayo? Dressed up as a girl, eh? Certainly I'd like to see it. I want a change after all the work I've done to-day. . . ."

I was taking advantage of this long voyage across the Pacific—which happened to be living up to its name—to write my preliminary notes about that enormous question I was investigating: White Women, Coloured Men. From Marseilles to Shanghai I had been in the sphere of the Browns and the Yellows. Now I already found myself right in the midst of my second sphere of inquiry: America—Africa, the Blacks. For, even while I was still in Japan, a table-companion in the comfortable express between Shimonoseki and Kobe had reminded me of the Americans' accusation against the Japanese:

"They say that we are plotting ***the elimination of the White race*** by admixture, by cross-breeding. . . . Not with the Japanese, of course. The Japanese would remain pure, quite pure, all by themselves. . . . But cross-breeding of the Whites with the Chinese, with the Indo-Chinese, with the Blacks—***above all, with the Blacks***. . . . No more White race! Japan over all! That's what some Americans say. Can you swallow that? Just what a silly child might imagine, eh? . . . But still, what if it were true? That would be, indeed, a Great Plot!"

These remarks, articulated with a Japanese lisp after several glasses of ***saki*** in the restaurant-car, had made a disturbing impression on me, and I could not get rid of it.

"Still, what if it were true?" What if this monstrous plan, this "elimination of the White race," were cherished in the most secret recesses of the master-minds in that great Far Eastern country, whose forest of factory-chimneys and whose age-old monuments had alike set me marvelling? Workers, soldiers, spies, missionaries: the Japanese, to my way of thinking, were quite equal to the most paradoxical of enterprises.

This Japanese who talked to me in the train had not failed to mention the Massie trial, one of the two legal battles—the other was the trial of the Scottsboro Negroes—in the racial war which I was on my way to study under the United States flag.

Mrs. Massie, the very young and quite irreproachable wife of an American naval lieutenant stationed at Honolulu, on the night of September 12, 1931, was assaulted and outraged by several persons unknown. Five Coloured men were arrested. Two were Hawaiians, one a Chinese half-breed, two Japanese. The victim identified four of them; but all of them persisted in denying their guilt. They were tried before a jury consisting mostly of natives; and this jury refused to find any verdict, which was tantamount to acquitting them. Hereupon Lieutenant Massie and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Fortescue, together with two American sailors, lured Kahahawai, one of the Hawaiians, who was said to be the worst brute out of the whole five, into a trap and killed him.

Such was the situation while I was on my way to Hawaii.

Then came another crime: ***another outrage on a White woman by a Coloured man***.

An American married lady living in Honolulu—she was luckier than Mrs. Massie, for her name was suppressed—the wife of a popular merchant and sportsman, awakened peacefully in her bedroom. Suddenly she heard a suspicious noise. She knew that her husband had gone out, and that her servant was absent from the bungalow.

She got up, in her night attire, and opened the kitchen door. She just had time to see an athletic Hawaiian in the striped clothes of a convict, who seemed to be making a choice among the provisions in the ice-box.

The brute threw himself upon her and left her in a faint. Then he fled the house, after exchanging his penitentiary garb for some of her husband's clothes.

Unfortunately for himself, the Hawaiian was not very well informed about rules of dress among the Whites. He had made up for himself a costume which struck him as both elegant and unobtrusive: white flannel trousers and a dinner jacket. Thus refitted, but without collar or shoes, he drove off in a stolen motor car.

The police promptly rounded up the early morning wearer of a dinner-jacket. He was a convict named Kaikapu, serving a life sentence. He was reincarcerated.

Meanwhile Honolulu became the scene of a reign of terror. Feeling ran high. No White woman ventured into her kitchen unless she was armed. The Hawaiian administration hastened to organise an additional brigade of police. The American Legion volunteered to preserve order. Honolulu lived in a state of hysteria.

In Washington the scandal had already aroused the United States Senate.

The Senators passed a resolution "that the Attorney-General should furnish them as soon as possible with a report on the administration in the Hawaiis." In particular, the assembly desired to know whether any change in the colonial system in the archipelago was needed.

On January 14 the Attorney-General dispatched his assistant, Mr. Seth V. Richardson, on a mission of inquiry in the islands. Nine collaborators accompanied him.

The ten gentlemen set to work conscientiously. They inspected official and unofficial organisations. They interrogated officials; Princess Abbie Kawahanakao, heiress of the old Hawaiian kings; leading men of all colours, and finally "the man in the street."

On their return to Washington they presented the Senate with a voluminous report, which is highly instructive for any colonial nation: the Richardson Report.

Here I shall merely summarise some passages in it which bear directly on the problem under consideration.

In the Hawaiis, the report declared, no race is favoured or privileged in any way. At the same time, it recognised that nowhere could racial antagonism find a more propitious field for experimentation—and for collision.

The proportion of Whites is very small. The native Hawaiians number barely a third of the population. All the rest of the population is the result of a persistent invasion of Japanese and Chinese immigrants.

The archipelago cannot be regarded as a White colony. It is undergoing a process of colonisation ***the other way round***: it is colonised ***by the Yellows***.

What would be the attitude of this majority in the event of a conflict between the United States and an Asiatic State? It would certainly not be pro-American.

The Chinese and Japanese are much more hardworking than the Hawaiians. They have replaced them in all really active forms of manual labour and other employment. Overseers, shop-assistants, hucksters are all Yellows.

Then how do the Hawaiians earn a living in their own country? Well, they have recognised the bent of our White democracies. They have all become officials, or even representatives of the people: legislators. Nobody else is to be seen in the offices of the local administration, which has been expanded to the maximum by the legislative chambers, themselves composed of Hawaiians.

Hence arose a general laxity in the working of the public machinery, and a natural increase in crime.

Speaking of the cinema, the report declared that—even though the view might be regarded as old-fashioned—most of the films shown in Hawaii were dangerously immoral.

The producers, of course, cater for the demands of their clients. But, working as they do at Hollywood, they fail to bear in mind that their films will be exported to tropical climates which are in themselves irritant to the senses.

In Hawaii the low-price cinema-halls are patronised by any number of youths of Oriental races. These cinemas show scarcely anything but films of passionate love, kidnapping and crime among Whites, and fill the heads of their audiences with pictures of half-naked women and with obscene ideas.

The result of these shows is inevitably bad. They cheapen the teaching which the White race professes to dispense for the uplifting of less civilised peoples.

The report went on to note that in few cities is prostitution so active as it is in Honolulu. The prostitutes, too, are of all colours. Asiatics can easily afford a White woman.

The commission of inquiry stayed at a fashionable hotel on a beach: evidently Waikiki beach. Mr. Richardson and his collaborators could therefore form ***de visu*** their own opinion of what certain critics called "the scandalous life of the bathers."

They observed nothing objectionable. But there were few winter visitors, on account of the "world depression" and the chilling effect of Mrs. Massie's misadventure.

In other years, the report suggested, it was very probable that larking, or still worse, occurred between some White women visitors, and certain "beach boys," lifesavers and other handsome, bronzed frequenters of the beach. It added that, according to the commissioners' information, ***the White women were unhappily often the provocative parties***.

Finally, coming to unquestionable sexual assaults, the report gave the figures of them: forty-six in five years, from 1927 to 1931. The number is high enough.

The guilty parties were almost always Hawaiians or Coloured immigrants. In accordance with that contagion which is so common among criminals, the outrage on Mrs. Massie seems to have started a whole series of attacks on White women. The report recorded still another case of outrage committed quite recently, this time by an Asiatic against an American woman, the wife of a naval mechanic.

Extremely human, penetrating, variegated, even tinged with humour, the Richardson Report would repay closer study. Taken as a whole, with all the more authority because it was so reserved, it denounced the novel, but vehement interest now taken by the Coloured peoples in the fashions, the luxury and the laxity of Americans and Europeans, and, above all, in that regular demi-goddess whom our films, our literature, our commercial publicity, ***our whole propaganda***, acclaim as the masterpiece of civilisation: the contemporary White woman.

II

AFTER making good use of my first evening in Honolulu, in April, 1932, I went back on board the ***Toshita Maru***.

In the smoking-room I was approached by an elderly White, who looked like a wealthy colonist.

"You sent a letter of introduction to a friend of mine, didn't you?" he said. "I understand you're interested in the Colour question. Well, come ashore with me. I'll give you a very clear, impartial idea of it."

"What, when it's past midnight?"

"Why not? I'm too busy in my office in the daytime. The country's quiet now, there's no traffic on the roads; and you can see perfectly."

Indeed, this Hawaiian night, under the full moon, was enchanting. The gardens, refreshed by nightfall, exhaled a perfume such as I had breathed nowhere else. To this the ocean added its salt breeze.

I felt that my host was the typical American, with all the energy, the straightforwardness, the constructive simplicity, which have made the United States a world Power. He was well qualified to act as the spokesman of the "White party" which had been formed in the course of the current troubles in response to that of the Coloured people.

We left Honolulu behind us and drove along a divine ***corniche*** road. It made the French Riviera seem rather poverty-stricken by comparison. Delightful bungalows stood out in a setting of palm trees. Everything was splendid, luxuriant and voluptuous.

"Here's the Ala Moana, where Thalia Massie went for a walk on a night just like this. Could she be afraid of anything in such a paradise?"

"Certainly not!"

"Glad you agree! And here's the waste ground—about the last bit of bush left—where she was maltreated by five drunken brutes. Didn't they deserve to be lynched?"

"They denied their guilt."

"Yes, sir, they denied it in Court, when they were encouraged to do so by the prevarication of only too many of the native officials. But ***we*** made them confess twice over. . . . Look here, I'm stopping for you on the Maunalua road. This was where they found Kahahawai's body in the car of Mrs. Fortescue, the mother-in-law of Thomas H. Massie. Well, Massie—and he's one of our naval officers—has declared that he killed the Hawaiian in a fit of fury, ***after Kahahawai had confessed to assaulting poor Thalia***. . . . And now we'll go on to Mount Pali. That's where a score of our sailors extracted a full confession from the Japanese Ida too, after threatening to throw him down a precipice. . . ."

"My dear sir," I put in quickly, "don't let's go so fast! You said you would give 'a clear, impartial idea' to me as a disinterested visitor. Well, you've done it. Thanks to you, I can see now that there's no way out of this deplorable business."

"What on earth do you mean? You're a White man, aren't you? Surely you're not going to weigh the lies of a lot of Yellow, Brown or Black swine in the balance against the sworn testimony of pure-blooded Americans?"

"I should never think of it, but for the fact that the touchiness which I find, even in a witness so outstanding as yourself, shows me very clearly how closely this particular question of the Massies and their adversaries is nowadays bound up with the whole, immense racial problem. It is not for us to solve this problem, especially as the

sexual character which it has assumed in our own time is only too often the result of imprudence on the part of White women. . . .”

My host made a gesture of exasperation.

“Oh, you French!” he exclaimed. “I’ve already been told that you won’t see any urgency in this question of racial defence. . . . But still, you’ve got big colonies of your own. This problem means just as much to you.”

“And we don’t ignore it,” I protested. “The only difference is that we treat it in our own way: French fashion. But I can understand your American point of view and sympathise with it. Every nation its own reaction. . . .”

My host headed the car for Waikiki, suburb and bathing-place of Honolulu.

“Let’s go and have a drink,” he suggested.

We drew up at the side of a fine asphalt roadway, outside a little night restaurant. Bootleg whisky and soda were brought to us in the car by an attractive Japanese waitress. My host went on:

“My dear French friend, your flag floats in the West Indies, over Indo-China, over part of Africa. You have millions of Black and Yellow subjects. . . .”

“Citizens,” I murmured, “and devoted soldiers, too!”

“Just as you like. In any case, you can’t separate yourselves from the White nations.”

“But we’ve no idea of doing so.”

“Then bear in mind that your France may experience the most terrible reactions of what is now going on in Hawaii. It may prove to be the last straw and lead to war between Japan and ourselves; and you’d gradually be dragged into it.”

I said nothing. He continued:

“You once had a certain Dreyfus case in France which, so I’m told, helped to load the dice for war in 1914. Our Massie case is just as important.”

“Oh, come, come!”

My host finished his whisky and soda.

“Are you going on to America after your stay here?” he asked.

“That’s my intention.”

“Then there you’ll see another kind of brute: our Negroes.”

“You don’t mince your words,” said I, taken aback.

“I’m a Southerner: I come from Florida. We used to keep slaves. I know what they’re worth.”

“Aren’t they worth ***just what you make them***?”

“No, sir! ***At bottom*** they’re just beasts. You can’t do anything with them. Go and look at their wretched cabins along the Mississippi, now that the planter’s stick doesn’t stir them up any more. They let themselves get eaten up by vermin and are rotten with disease; whereas, if there’s one country where the least effort will give a man comfort, it’s America.”

“Perhaps they’re easily satisfied.”

“No, they’re not, but they’d rather steal than earn an honest living. . . . As for their attitude towards White women, if they’re respectful it’s only from fear.”

“Are they really so attracted by White women?”

“The Negroes? Much more so than the Yellows. Our wives and daughters never venture by themselves into the ‘Black belts,’ the Negro suburbs. If they did, they’d be ambushed, insulted, molested. . . . You people in Europe don’t know anything about that. You’ve never known the anxiety we feel when some innocent girl belonging to us in our lovely South is late getting home. ‘Where is she?’ we wonder. ‘I hope the Blacks haven’t done her any harm.’ You get indignant about reports of lynchings. The

cables often exaggerate them. Some of your writers have said things about lynchings which not only show how easily they're taken in, but are also positive blasphemies on America. Of course there have been some vengeful uprisings. But they've followed crimes which were inexcusable, and they took place because the law was too lax and the police too weak. Preaching isn't going to cure the madness of the Negro when he starts dreaming about White women. Let me tell you, sir, that's the sole sphere in which the Negroes show themselves determined, combative, unmanageable. One might think the whole purpose of their wretched Black humanity was summed up in desire for White women. . . ."

His exposition disturbed me. But, on the whole, I remained sceptical.

"I haven't seen your American Blacks yet," I said. "But I know plenty of French Blacks; and there's nothing bestial like that about them."

He was tactful enough to admit there might be a difference.

"But ours are sometimes regular mad dogs," he wound up. "Then, if they bite, they've got to be killed. . . ."

"And suppose," I suggested, "they've been ***encouraged*** to bite? . . ."

"What do you mean?" he cried.

"Look here, among you Americans hasn't there ever been a White woman—not a single one—out of all the lower-class women born of non-Nordic immigrants, who, even though she may not be as mad as you say the Blacks are, has still sometimes taken it into her head to tempt them, to provoke them? For they're men, after all."

I thought that dignified gentleman was going to take me by the throat.

"Sir," he said, obviously making an effort to keep his temper, "not another word! I respect you. . . ."

"And I hope you'll go on doing so. Nevertheless . . ."

"Please don't!" he persisted. "Haven't you had a close-up of Coloured men? Can't you see for yourself what they are? ***They're just apes***, that's all they are! What could they have about them to attract any White woman—any ***lady***? They're just apes, I say."

In his features, in the firm set of his clean-shaven lips, in the jut of his brow—an athlete's rather than a thinker's—I could trace a mingled resemblance to Ingres's Greek heroes and Gainsborough's English sportsmen. Centuries away, leagues and leagues away, he perpetuated all of them in modern life. I caught a glimpse of what race means: the White race—my own race. . . .

He was so sure he was right. His confidence in his own judgment was compounded of his innate honesty, his own inability to mislead. His judgment might be simple-minded; but it was touchingly sincere.

A handful of deserters on the immense racial battlefield, a few White women, perhaps simply betrayed by their emotions or their feelings—could they count by comparison with the moral standard of this man, this heir, this spokesman of ever so many other women? "Any lady," he had said: something higher than a mere woman. . . .

He could tell that his summing-up of the situation had silenced me. Quite happy again, he drove off, and wound up:

"Our lawyers sent for alienists to examine Lieutenant Massie. Just imagine that! Just because he killed a vicious beast who had dared to attack his Thalia. That wasn't the act of a madman: it was the act of a decent husband with all his wits about him. If Mrs. Massie had tried to stop him, then they might have got alienists for her; for she'd have been as mad as a hatter! . . ."

"I'll go and have a look at all this in court to-morrow," I murmured.

III

AFTER attending a hearing of the Massie-Fortescue trial, I left the Judiciary Building with my nerves on edge, myself infected by that atmosphere of suspicion and hatred. Just for the moment, the sun, the colour, the perfume, the wonderful beauty of all Nature in these exquisite islands had lost their appeal to me. I was conscious of nothing but another aspect of reality, fashioned by mankind; and there was nothing either beautiful or soothing about that!

Then, all at once, the sinister spell was broken. I was seized by an urge to get away from that frightful forum. White business men, talking through their noses; Yellow men whispering or "all ears"; the whole gamut of colour of the Hawaiians, bronze, rust and chocolate, lisping in their own language—all these struck me as so many loathsome caricatures.

A car bore me away from them.

"Take me anywhere you like," I told my smiling, sunburnt chauffeur; "but give me peace!"

Three minutes later, he stopped in an avenue of palm-trees.

"Here we are, sir," he said. "Turn to the right."

I did so, I walked ten paces, and I found myself on the golden sand of Waikiki beach.

There was not a sound, save for the surge of the deep blue sea, not in its wrath, and a trill of laughter. I was so far away from the hotels that I could not hear their orchestras playing. Suddenly I was stricken motionless, with my breath taken away, by a picture so innocent, so idyllic that I was at once reminded of the Biblical Genesis.

A group of White women, American girls, in clinging swimming-suits, were sporting in the surf. They plunged into it with gay shouts, and then emerged from it again in all their splendour, taking off their caps and shaking their short amber or platinum locks. Their faces, their arms, their shoulders, their legs, had just the perfect sunburn of blondes who live in the open air.

Around them, freely, carelessly, like children, sported three or four "beach boys," tall Hawaiians of some twenty summers, wearing no more than red bathing-slips which in no way broke, but rather emphasised, the superb lines of their classically graceful bodies. These fellows, handsome as Adams fashioned by God Himself, were dark-skinned: not by any means black, but chestnut or cigar coloured. Bright flowers, yellow or red, were stuck behind their ears amid their frizzy hair.

The harmony between these White girls and these Coloured boys struck me as an incomparable artistic success. It was pure harmony, like all great works of art. It evoked neither lust, nor even the most commonplace erotic reaction. I reflected that such harmony must prevail among the archangels and the angels.

Their play was innocence itself. No minister of the Gospel, no honest censor of morals, could take the least exception to it. For that matter, were these Hawaiian youths, so very muscularly alive, mentally alive at all? Perhaps it was their very child-likeness which restored such innocence to these sophisticated American girls, too.

What a fine sight it was to see them together! The girls were the paler, ***just because they were female***; the boys were warmer-coloured, as males should be. What groups of polychromatic statuary they presented as they swam together, or ran after one another on the beach! Why should not the human race of the future—one likes to dream of it as beautiful—be just like this?

As though by way of emphasising the kind of artistic revelation on which I had happened, an American appeared, also in a bathing-suit and reading a newspaper: the

brother or the husband of one of those girls. He was young, and rather thin. Fully dressed, no doubt, he would look as good a representative as the next of that superior race, the White "supermen."

But alas, side by side with those savages, he struck me, with his pale yellow skin, as really ugly! . . .

As he came up to the girls who were bathing so innocently, he brandished his newspaper. Here was news of the trial; here was race hatred! The "beach boys" took themselves off. The White women, squatting in a circle, started discussing the case as they dried themselves. The idyllic vision was spoilt. Eve had once more lost her innocence, her infancy of Genesis.

But, for my part, I carried away with me that unforgettable picture: my "group of polychromatic statuary." It was just one rebus the more to decipher in the course of my inquiry, which was next to take me to the United States themselves, that stronghold of the Whites.

In lands peopled by one and the same race, the clash between patricians and plebeians, between rich and poor, any political or religious disagreement, may in itself contribute an exciting, a dramatic atmosphere to criminal trials. Quite recently we have had such cases, painful enough, alike in England and in France.

But, after all, our "class" struggles, our clashes in the sphere of philosophy, are not so implacable as that race-war which I have witnessed in Hawaii. Over that war, over that clash between the Yellows and the Whites of to-day, there brooded long centuries of two utterly different processes of heredity.

Much more even than the present-day difference in their pigmentation, what separated the opposing parties was their ancestral code of customs. So I saw them facing one another like cat and dog: like two irreconcilable species of animal.

Can they never be reconciled? No Englishman, no Frenchman who knows what pains, what brains, what broad-mindedness we have put into our work in our respective colonies, will ever despair of such a reconciliation. But, I must repeat, one of the great secrets of the future peace of the world, wherever Coloured men confront White women, consists in finding a formula—and it is not yet found—for solving this new inter-racial problem, this ***sexual*** problem, which the Massie and similar cases have thrown into such high relief.

IV

AFTER my departure from Hawaii, the trial of Mrs. Fortescue, Lieutenant Massie and the two sailors went on interminably.

In the end, the jury brought in a verdict of "Guilty" against the four Whites.

They were acquitted on the charge of murder and found guilty simply of manslaughter, of which the technical definition is "the illegal slaying of a human being without criminal intent."

The penalty to which they were liable was ten years' hard labour.

Immediately a storm of indignation burst among Americans, both in the archipelago and on the Continent.

The prisoners' seventy-year-old advocate, Mr. Darrow, for his part, admitted that he was overwhelmed with disappointment. He announced his intention to appeal against the verdict. This was what he said—and its bearing was far wider than that merely of the Massie case:

"***We have just begun to fight***."

In fact, for those who had eyes to see, this sex-war, this race-war, was but beginning.

Though any jury's deliberations are supposed to be secret, the conflict of opinion among the jurymen, partly White and partly Coloured, who brought in the verdict against Kahahawai's killers was revealed to the public.

One of the jurymen, a Chinese, Theodore Char, an accountant and sometime student at the University of Chicago, made a statement to the Press which was reproduced in America and in Asia. Even if it were not "inspired," it must have received semi-official approval; for it seemed calculated to explain the verdict and to appease partisans in both camps who were labouring under a sense of injustice.

"We jurymen," declared Char, "acted in accordance only with common sense and respect for the law, and we paid no attention to any question of race. In the last analysis we felt that nobody is entitled to take the law into his own hands. We fully realised the sufferings of the Massie-Fortescue family. All of us sympathised with that family. But we were all agreed that this did not justify murder."

With typically Chinese slyness, Mr. Char added that the farrago of the alienists was unintelligible to his colleagues and himself.

Not all the jurymen were satisfied that Kahahawai had really outraged Mrs. Massie. On the other hand, they could not feel sure that the fatal shot was fired by Massie and not by Mrs. Fortescue or one of the sailors. In this state of uncertainty, they decided to find all the accused guilty, but to bring in the most lenient verdict they could.

During the very first half-hour of their deliberation, seven of the jurymen pronounced themselves in favour of acquittal, and five in favour of a verdict of premeditated murder. Such were the positions originally taken up, and ***jurymen of the White race were divided*** between these two extreme opinions. At length, when hour after hour and day after day of isolation had wearied the adversaries, the relatively innocuous middle course of bringing in a verdict of manslaughter was suggested. It promptly won over eleven of the jurymen, and finally the whole twelve.

Quite contrary to what was hoped, this statement by Char disgusted on the one hand the Hawaiians and the Japanese, who wanted blood for blood, and on the other

hand the Americans, in whose eyes an outrage on a White woman justified the putting to death of a score of Coloureds. On both sides it strengthened the idea that the Massie case had not been probed to the bottom.

There was general desire for a rehearing of it, with .the full facts brought to light. But this desire soon changed into disappointment and a sense of grievance, that leaven of hatred; for it became obvious that the American Government, for its part, proposed to wind up the whole case.

It had already been made clear that Lieutenant Massie would not be dismissed the service, despite the rule that sentence by a criminal court involved such dismissal. On May 5 he and his three fellow-prisoners again appeared in court.

They heard sentence passed on them. Then they underwent "one hour's imprisonment," in the cordial custody of the Sheriff, in the Iolani Palace Hotel: not a very forbidding jail. After this they were informed that the Governor-General of Hawaii, the Hon. Lawrence M. Judd, had "commuted their sentence" to this brief incarceration. So they found themselves, not pardoned, but officially exonerated so far as the law was concerned, and free.

After this juridical ceremonial, the Massies announced that they were immediately leaving for the mainland, and that they did not intend ever to return to Hawaii.

This announcement disposed of that remaining bugbear: a fresh trial of Kahahawai's comrades. It could not very well take place if Thalia, that obviously essential witness, was not available to give her testimony. Nor was there now any further question of the appeal first contemplated by Mr. Darrow.

But the process of appeasement thus applied to White and Coloured alike proved purely a matter of form. It served only to foster in everybody's mind an ill-omened legend of injustice, arbitrariness, mystery.

This legend, once implanted, was now ready to work underground towards the propagation of future wars.

For that matter, as I had felt at the time of my stay in Honolulu, this dramatic Massie case was henceforth beyond hope of being cleared up, even if anybody wanted to clear it up.

V

MEANWHILE I had reached San Francisco, where, as tourist propaganda puts it, "Asia meets virile America." Here, one night, I received a striking reminder of the Massie case. I witnessed an outbreak of racial antagonism, profoundly sexual in its character.

The draught-board lay-out of American cities has the advantage that the stranger within their gates runs little risk of getting lost in their very simple system of streets all at right-angles to one another. On the night in question, from Union Square I went straight ahead along Stockton Street and turned off into Grant Avenue. Then, enthusiast that I am for all city swarms, I started strolling at random in what is left of the old Asiatic suburb since the earthquake of May, 1906.

If you ever mention that catastrophe to a San Franciscan, mind you call it "the fire." In 'Frisco they don't like it to be mentioned that the earth shudders from time to time, just like the skin of an ox worried by flies. All they will admit is that in 1906 some houses were burned. It was, of course, the shock that started the fire; but there is no sense in annoying these good people.

Chinatown, that Chinese-American Montmartre, stands on the steep slopes of a hill. Around me buildings rose topped with horned roofs like pagodas. Their ground-floors were divided between curio-shops and restaurants, taverns and dance-halls with painted lanterns, decorated in red lacquer. Electric signs, announcing "Chop Suey," "***Sukiyaki***" lit up and vanished again in the rather chilly spring night.

Thanks to the "depression," it all seemed deserted and dead. Only a few silent, shivery shadows of Yellows in bowler hats and thin coats glided out of side streets and disappeared once more.

Then suddenly there was a hubbub. A band of revellers invaded the roadway. They dashed for the cheap dance-halls as though they were attacking them. They were American sailors: a fine lot of young fellows, athletic-looking in their short tunics and their slacks clinging to their legs.

There was a naval squadron in the bay. Its searchlights were making magic in the sky; and its sailors on shore-leave, just like our French sailors at Toulon, were bent on getting rid of the dollars that had burned their pockets at sea. Little they cared about the "depression" that made business men virtuous.

They were not short of women. Their crazy company, already more than a little fired with bootleg whisky, included just as many blonde minxes, dishevelled and uproarious, as stalwart, hilarious youths.

All of them were singing, shouting, playing the fool. They made a fine breach in the boredom of that avenue conceded to Asia in exile on the puritan territory of the United States. For a moment or two, I imagined myself in Paris, in the heart of Montmartre when Americans are amusing themselves there like boys out of school.

I went on walking; and, a little farther away, this was what I saw.

Two sailors came out of a "chop suey." They clattered down the staircase with its glass treads. Hanging on to the arm of each of them was a fine girl, half-drunk.

Just as the four of them got out into the street, ill luck would have it that two Japanese came along. They were ambling along quite inoffensively, hugging the wall with that proud humility, that polite unsociability which the Japanese take with them wherever they expatriate themselves.

I was quite close, and I did not notice anything they did or said to justify an altercation. The Yellows may have whispered some joking remark in their own language about the drunkenness and the indecency of the Whites. Or they may simply have

stared at the White women with bold, lascivious eyes—but then the eyes of Japanese are so well hidden in their wooden faces in between the two-fold curb of their lids!

Be that as it may, all at once one of the sailors let go of his girl. He made a rush at the Japanese, who flattened themselves against the wall like cats surprised by a dog.

"What the Hell!" he shouted. "What's that you were mouthing there, you dirty dogs, you rotten herrings? Gee, c'mon, Bim—these two Yellow guys insulted Gussie!"

The young colossus had instantly been sobered by rage, by a fierce, frantic indignation. With his fists already clenched, he hammered the Japanese with monosyllabic curses in American slang which sounded as hard as boxing-gloves on a punching-ball.

The second sailor, tottering and less combative, joined his comrade.

"C'mon, no trouble, sunny boy," he said.

But while Gussie, the girl who may or may not have been insulted, was ready to laugh it off, the other White woman, the sailors' second partner, flung herself into the fray. She was farther away than myself from the first couple, so she cannot have seen or heard anything. She just went mad; but there was method in her madness.

"Oh, yes," she cried, "if we were in Hawaii, ***they'd treat us just like Lieutenant Massie's wife***!"

Then it was as though a magic incantation had sent the sailors out of their minds. They started hitting out frantically. The one who had hung back was just as crazy as the one who had started the trouble. Behind them, the girls turned anything they could find in the dust-bins into missiles.

At the sound of that sinister name, "Massie," the Yellows had realised that they must fight or die. They fought, with brains as well as brawn, using all the ju-jitsu dodges they had practised from their childhood.

I witnessed only one round. One of the Whites dropped on the pavement, with his arm broken, judging by his gasp of pain. On the other hand, one of the Japanese went down under a blow that would have felled an ox.

The sequel took place outside that impromptu ring in Grant Avenue. Metaphorically, it may be said that this fight, begun elsewhere much earlier, is nowhere near finishing yet.

The sailor who was still on his feet was on the point of hurling himself at the enemy who had just got the better of the other American. Then, all at once, he checked himself, listened, signalled to the two girls, and hastened to pick up his fallen White comrade.

"Lookie, folks," he cried, "let's beat it!"

His ears, quicker than mine, had caught the still distant steps of a naval police patrol coming up at a run. Soon truncheons and handcuffs would be on the scene.

On the spot, the American girls picked up their skirts and fled. The White party disappeared. The intact Japanese, on his side, quickly carried his fellow-countryman away, with the help of some Chinese who emerged from the dark side-streets in the neighbourhood. Nobody wanted to wait for the naval police.

Nevertheless, the more bellicose American, the one who had begun the row, found time to shout, at the top of his voice, that challenge which had fallen from the lips of the old lawyer, Clarence Darrow; that sentence which had become a sort of symbol of the whole gigantic America-Asia trial by battle:

"Just you wait, you Yellow swine! We haven't finished with you yet. ***We have just begun to fight***!"

Like any number of other Frenchmen, and of British, Americans and Japanese, and also of Germans, veterans of 1918, I know from experience ***what a real war means nowadays***. As a sympathetic, and also as a selfish person, having been a grateful guest of China, Japan and the United States, having made friends with Yellows as well as Whites when I found them to be men of good will and good heart, need I say that I sincerely hope this prophecy will not come true?

Great Britain and France, the godmothers of the Coloured peoples in their African and Asiatic empires, could neither of them remain aloof if the Pacific Ocean belied its name. They are directly interested in the racial conflict which has now been revived, as the Massie case shows, among instances innumerable, ***through a sexual problem***.

We have created the Englishwoman, the Frenchwoman, the American woman: three masterpieces among White women. It is therefore for us above all, if we still deserve our high reputation as civilising influences, to teach the other White nations, and all the Coloured peoples, a less deadly kind of sexuality, a worship of beauty more tolerant and less material.

We have to reckon with this new factor: ***the Coloured now believe in the superiority of White women over women of their own races***. This new factor will lead our century to war or peace, in accordance with our capacity for interpreting and controlling it.

PART TWO

THE COLOUR BAR IN AMERICA

FOREWORD TO PART TWO

THE following pages record some of my impressions about the "Colour bar" in the United States; or, to be more explicit, the position of the Negroes in relation to the Whites. I am aware that there is no subject which the American Whites regard as more unpleasant, not to say hateful. In France, too, we have certain subjects which exasperate us, because we feel that they are problematic and perhaps hopeless. We would prefer that people never mentioned them. If a foreigner takes it upon himself to discuss them, we are quite rightly annoyed at his lack of tact.

Having said that much as regards my own country, I am bound to admit my immense impertinence in venturing to study this question: an impertinence of which I was made conscious in North America.

Let me at least say—as I was at pains to point out when some of these studies of mine were first published in a different form in France—that no part of this book has given me more occasion for pondering and reconsideration.

I like, I admire and I respect the United States. When I returned to New York on the maiden voyage of the giant French liner ***Normandie*** in June, 1935, I was delighted, as soon as I disembarked, to breathe once more the invigorating, hospitable atmosphere of America. Not for anything in the world would I present myself in the light of a hostile critic, still less a calumniator, of that fine country, with all its energy, all its love of fair play.

I have winnowed my notes. I have suppressed much in them, merely as a matter of tact. As for what remains after this process, in the first place I have adopted the best safeguard: nowhere have I sought to set down the truth as I see it except in the most general terms, without any rancour, any prejudice, or any intention to wound or even to offend. If anybody can convict me of being wrong I shall be glad. I cannot say more for my sincerity.

In the interest of my informants, and out of respect for any institutions involved, I have altered some real names and the setting of some real scenes. I have cast a veil of fantasy or even fiction over certain things that might otherwise seem too shocking. What remains strictly authentic—and this is all I am concerned about—is the ***significance*** of what I saw and what I heard. Such is the structure of my narrative. I have nothing to add; and, for this part of my book even more than for the other parts, I refuse beforehand to engage in any idle polemics.

At the same time, I am occasionally compelled to give real names or make real people recognisable. Some of them are influential people; some of them are very humble. I am much more afraid of harming the latter than incurring the wrath of the former. Since the exigencies of my narrative require it, I have no hesitation about naming or indicating these persons; but I must make a point of emphasising that while I have the utmost respect for their laws and customs, I am far from being familiar with all the peculiarities of these laws and customs. I should be very glad, if I could legitimately do so, to borrow the formula of American detective novels: "Despite any appearance to the contrary, no character in this book has ever existed. . . ."

I cannot do this; and so I must rely on the common sense and the sense of humanity of my readers. It is for them to decide whether they can forgive me.

Another consideration which I have kept constantly in mind is the position of France, that great colonial nation, the Power which exercises a protectorate over empires in Asia and Africa.

The French doctrine of universal equality, the work of her philosophers in the eighteenth century, which was borrowed from Christianity itself, remains of utmost

importance in the sphere of ideas. But in present-day conflicts, into which the question of race enters more and more, this doctrine might be carried to the point of absurdity if France, that country of clear thinking, failed to keep it constantly under review in practice.

My fellow-countrymen stand in the most urgent need of informing themselves about that still embryonic but very interesting science: ethnology, the science of race. For they themselves are either descendants or tutors of all the tribes of humanity.

I have followed with admiration the work of the great Anglo-American ethnologists, still so little known in France: in particular, Mr. Lothrop Stoddard. After travelling all over the world, I am satisfied that such things as races exist, with all their physical heredity and age-old tradition. There are the three main branches of descent from Japheth, Shem and Ham, the Whites, the Yellow-Browns, and the Blacks; and there are also ***several distinct racial categories of Whites*** as well as Coloured. This is an especially novel idea for most French people.

I believe that we must, as soon as possible, give a scientific status to the whole subject of sex, marriage and eugenics: a status based upon the poignant lessons to be derived from the study of racial crossbreeding in the past, which will show whether such cross-breeding has proved successful or disastrous.

I also believe that ***there are certain racial categories instinctively opposed to any admixture***, because any admixture would mean the loss of their physical perfection and their intellectual aristocracy: in short, loss of their integral superiority.

Finally, I believe that ***there are certain White women who simply do not look upon a*** "***Coloured man***" ***as a man at all from the sexual point of view***.

Nothing, ***therefore, could be farther from my thoughts in the following pages than to give any offence to such women***.

If I refer to White women being attracted by the exotic charm of Coloured men, it must be assumed that these ***other women*** belong to less pure racial categories, which doubtless have already undergone admixture during the long history of the quasi-divine White skin, that privileged possession of the lords of the world.

CHAPTER I

SHE WAS SORRY SHE WASN'T EATEN !

"ANOTHER highball?" our host suggested.

"Well, just one," I replied; "but it must be the last one." I was afraid of getting fuddled.

The American liners running between the Far East and California, calling at Hawaii on their way, are just as fine, just as comfortable, as their British or Japanese rivals. But, at the quite recent date when I picked up one of them at Honolulu, the prohibition law was still in force.

The result was that infinitely more alcohol was drunk on board than among the Japanese or the Canadians. But you drank "under the rose," everybody in his own cabin; or, to be more exact, in groups of acquaintances, all guests at a party taking turns to repay the compliment.

So it came about that a friendly Californian had invited me, that evening, to a "highball" party, which bore witness to the wealth of his travelling cellar. I owed my invitation to a lady: my neighbour at table in the dining saloon, where you drank nothing but iced water. She caught up at parties.

When the chief steward was seating the passengers, he had put us side by side because both of us happened to be alone, and he had two spare places at that particular table. At the outset it was a matter of complete indifference to me. Mrs. Watson was at that age when American women manage to remain juvenile, though they make no attempt to conceal their grey hair. I had no designs on her still charming middle age. But now she excited my admiration by her astonishing imperviousness to alcohol, which she imbibed in the most virile and jovial way.

I have suffered so much from hearing Frenchwomen vilified that I should be slow to fall into a similar error and express myself unfairly about the women of that great country, the United States, for which I have so much respect. But there is no denying that plenty of American women drink—or at least used to drink—like sponges. Their excuse is the ***incompleteness*** of the life laid down for them, especially under the regime of the Volstead Act. They deserve a better fate.

"Let's toast one another as the Hawaiians do," said Mrs. Watson to me. "I touch your glass at the top, in the middle, and at the bottom. That means that I wish you happiness all over."

"Many thanks, Madam. Did you stay long in Hawaii?"

"Several months, and I went all over the archipelago. I didn't stay in Honolulu, as timid women do. In Hawaii I've seen snow in the tropics and volcanoes in eruption. I hunted and fished with the natives."

"All by yourself?"

"Why not? I'm a divorcee—a woman on holiday!"

My own libations emboldened me to ask her a straight question.

"So poor Mrs. Massie's example didn't deter you? In short . . . are the Hawaiians so much given to outraging White women?"

She smiled: not in the least shocked, but contemptuous.

"The Hawaiians? For my part, I found them very nice and quiet—as gentle as lambs!"

Then, as though she were thrilled by a memory which suddenly gave her calm face almost ecstatic illumination and intensity, she went on:

"You know, the Coloured people in Hawaii have never been unhappy in that lovely climate of theirs, either under their own kings or under us. So they haven't got the banked-down fire, the really savage fury of . . . of certain others who used to be oppressed. ***They're*** not volcanoes with the lid off!"

"***What others***?" I asked, suddenly seized with curiosity.

Mrs. Watson took a drink, looked round to see whether anybody was listening to us, and then, under cover of the hubbub in the cabin, in which we were the quietest people, she breathed into my ear:

"The Blacks."

Then she added at once:

"You're French, aren't you? You don't recognise any 'Colour bar,' I suppose? You don't believe that we Whites are the only real human beings? I've travelled myself, you know."

"I see."

"I'm not talking about our wretched Negroes in the States. They've been domesticated by the Whites. If they try to stir, you've only got to shout: 'You'll be lynched!'. . ."

"How convenient! Then where, Madam, did you find the Blacks who gave you this . . . this different impression?"

"In Cuba," she replied, without hesitation. "Didn't you see anything in the papers five years ago about the disappearance of Mrs. Watson? It was I who was kidnapped. It didn't attract so much attention as the Massie case; but the papers reported something about it. They said . . . very much what I wanted them to say. Does all this interest you?"

"Indeed it does!"

"I wasn't outraged, you know. There wasn't anything ***of that kind***. I nearly lost my life, to be sure. Still . . . I've been married three times, and ***never have I felt so much a woman***."

"Please tell me all about it. . . ."

"Not here. Listen, I'm not going to any party to-morrow evening. I'll come to your cabin. Don't ask anybody else."

I lived through twenty-four very anxious hours. Not that I feared any attempt on my virtue—nor even blackmail, which is always possible on American soil when a man lets a woman into his room. Mrs. Watson did not strike me as that kind of woman at all.

What worried me was that, being French, I had gone on board the liner without laying in any stock of whisky or brandy. I had to get some from somewhere.

Making it a point of honour, I spent the whole day on this delicate quest. I besought my room-steward, my table-steward, the deck-steward. I climbed up to the wireless cabin. I descended to the kitchens. The whole crew were obviously in possession of bootleg liquor; but nobody was prepared to sell any to a dubious European like myself. When the time came for her visit, which I had not countermanded, Mrs. Watson stole into my cabin. She was in the best of spirits; but her face fell when she saw nothing in my cabin but some bottles of ginger-ale, the barman's poverty-stricken provision.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "is that all you've got?"

I shrugged my shoulders helplessly.

"What a pity! I won't be able to tell you about Cuba and its cannibals without something with a 'kick' in it."

I could have hanged myself from mortification. I foresaw her walking out on me in disgust.

"I must have something to start me going," she went on. "Why, what have you got there?"

She darted to the wash-basin, over which I had put a big bottle of French toilet alcohol bought in Shanghai. She uncorked it and sniffed.

"Fine! I'll bet that will mix with ginger-ale. . . ."

"Will it?" I murmured, aghast. "Don't you poison yourself here, Madam. . . ."

"Don't you worry. . . ."

In a pint glass she mixed the scented lotion and ginger-beer, half and half. She sipped it, smacked her lips, and swallowed the lot. Sympathy set my teeth on edge.

"That makes a good highball," she pronounced, though her voice sounded a bit shaky. "Won't you have one?"

She mixed another for herself.

"Don't take too much all at once," I implored her. "Wait and see what effect it has." I was still afraid of seeing her drop dead.

She lay down on the couch.

"Well, I'll wait a minute. . . . Yes, that's all right. It's given me a 'kick.' And now I can tell you all about Cuba, just as it happened. Oh, those Blacks, those ***gnagnigos***! . . ."

She laughed oddly, as though she were a bit up in the clouds. Then she went on, in a kind of quiet sing-song:

"Well, I was just divorced, five years ago. It was after my second marriage to Pat—a fool of a fellow. You may take it that he had made me sick of love for some time. I felt I wanted a holiday—just the same as now. But that time, instead of going to Hawaii by sea, I went to Havana by air.

"Havana in '29—it was still the 'boom' period, the height of prosperity, one long round of amusement. The Cubans figured that it would go on for ever, that rain of dollars out of the pockets of rich Americans. At bottom they hated us, those dirty dogs, those spawn of Spaniards and Negresses, just because we went to drink and spend money among them and share in their vices. They called us '***patos de Florida***,' ducks from Florida; and, when they could be sure of playing us a dirty trick and getting away with it, they never missed the chance.

"Well, what did I do in Havana? I did the same as everybody else: I tried to have a good time. Plenty of iced punch, the speciality of the West Indies, by way of a change from our usual drinks. I danced, and I went to all kinds of places. You know, there isn't anywhere on earth organised like Havana for entertaining foreigners. It makes your Paris look like a capital of angels! There are streets and streets with the most extraordinary theatres and the most frightful cinema-shows—in public, in the open air! Well, I followed the guides and went everywhere. I didn't ***do*** anything, mind you. It doesn't amuse me, unless I happen to be in love; and my two marriages had both proved fiascos. I tell you I should have gone on thinking I was made out of wood—but for that adventure of mine with the Blacks.

"So I went everywhere anybody suggested, simply out of sheer curiosity. I'm that kind of traveller. I'm not saying that I didn't hope to get a sexual thrill somewhere; but everywhere I went just left me disgusted or sorrowful.

"Nothing happened until I met a wretched mulatto named Gonzalez. He was a dancer at a place called the 'Montmartre.' It was about the last place where I should have expected to find anything novel. . . . Well, he told me about secret Black dances,

about the ***gnagnigos***: and, with all the calmness of a woman who was bored to death, I said: 'All right, I'd like to see them.'

"We set off at night. He told me to take whatever I wanted in a handbag. He took precautions, I found out afterwards, to avoid anybody seeing him drive me away and to set up an alibi for himself. He drove full speed along the main Machado road. We went through Matanzas at I don't know what hour of the night. Next we came to a valley, and finally to the jungle. I felt a bit afraid when, just before dawn, he made me mount a big horse and we plunged into the forest. I realised that nobody but outlaw Negroes could live in these backwoods. But that in itself gave me a 'kick,' a pleasant thrill. . . .

"We came to some huts, and Gonzalez handed me over to a hideous great Black called Tenedor. He could massacre a few words of English. In his own language, the only word I could recognise was the one he used for me, smiling all over his thick lips: '***Coubitche***,' which means 'little girl.' Flattering, wasn't he? For that matter, I didn't take much trouble to make him understand me. I knew that I was to attend the dances the next night, and Gonzalez had sworn to take me back to the Paseo de Marti in Havana on the following day.

"Tenedor prepared some breakfast for me. As soon as I had swallowed it, everything changed for me—***my whole world***. It was obvious that he had put some sort of drug into my rum. . . . I suppose you know what those ***gnagnigos*** in Cuba are? They correspond to the Voodoo sorcerers in your French West Indies. They're the heads of a secret society of Blacks, going back to the time of slavery, which wasn't abolished in Cuba until 1868.

"They started by coming to an understanding against their masters, and they learned to make all kinds of brews from herbs: philtres to send a man mad, and a terrible drug which does away with hunger and fatigue until the man who has taken it finally collapses, simply used-up, burnt-out. Then they have regular poisons for killing in all kinds of ways—killing when a man feels perfectly safe—and counterfeiting all kinds of illness. . . . Whatever they used on me, I felt quite well, and I didn't experience any pain or even any anxiety. It just made me obey them as though they were my parents. I ate and slept and got up again just as they told me—I, a White woman, an American citizen, entitled to vote for Hoover or Roosevelt!

"But the funniest thing about it was that, inside this sort of somnambulism of mine, I retained part of my consciousness. I remembered everything that happened to me.

"I could never have told the police where they took me, for the jungle looks very much the same everywhere. We went through perhaps ten hamlets—unless it was always the same one, and they kept on taking me through it by way of performing some ritual. . . . The great link of their secret society, as in the case of the Voodoos, is magic, a barbarous kind of religion. In their eyes everything has its own genius, everything exerts an influence: the earth, the trees, ***the colour of our skins***. But in one way they're different from the Voodoos, thanks to what they borrowed from the nation which enslaved their ancestors: Spain.

"Your French Blacks, I believe, owe to France a rather nebulous Catholic tradition, tempered by anti-clerical scepticism. It's much the same with the Haitians, whom our American Seabrook has studied. But the Cuban ***gnagnigos*** merge the age-old fetishism of Africa with the passionate, bloodthirsty Christianity of old Castile, embodying the ideas of the Inquisition and traces of the Moors. They are the most mysterious of all the Black magicians. After my incarnation among them, the specialists who interrogated me told me so.

“Well, Tenedor turned out to be the sorcerer-in-chief! He had a whole retinue of sub-sorcerers, sword-bearers and fan-bearers—a whole grotesque court in tawdry tinsel. They kept on circling round me in an endless dance, not only all night, but all day long, too, under the shelter of an immense thatched roof. Here they were free. They didn’t need the darkness to hide their joy.

“I saw that dance forbidden to any White, I heard the sound of tom-toms and flutes—and I imagine I hear it still. I imagine I can feel, under my naked arms, the carven arm-rests of my throne; for I was their queen. Indeed, I was more than their queen: ***I was their goddess***!

“I, the White woman; I, ***Whiteness itself***, the miracle in their eyes of a skin such as they dreamed of possessing for their own bodies (I hope that doesn’t disgust you, eh?)—they had captured me quite politely, without a struggle. There I was, docile, quite content, and ***indeed happy***. . . . I was intoxicated, of course; either by their drug, or by their exaltation, the magnetism of their intoxication. . . . You must understand that this adoration of theirs was of a very peculiar kind, with nothing ***directly*** sexual about it. They were all men, Black men; but what they saw in me was not me ***as an individual woman,*** but ***a symbolical White woman***. The sacrifice for which they destined me, the wholly religious homage which they proposed to pay me, was not what you may have imagined. They wanted to ***incorporate me in their race***, ***in their own personalities***, so that my Whiteness might whiten them a little. . . . They were going to ***eat me***.

“And it struck me as quite natural. . . . It didn’t disgust me in the least. It was as though Tenedor had converted me to the old superstition of the Negroes, even since they first set eyes on White people: ‘Let us eat them, so that we may become like them.’ Why should they prefer an adult woman like myself to a White infant, which was their usual sacrifice? Why did they invoke me, at one and the same time, as the Virgin Mary and as a ‘she-goat without horns’? Why had I for neighbours on my altar queer dolls, obsolete arms, plates with flour and fruit on them? All this symbolism remains a mystery to me. . . .

“What was the most logical thing in my own state of intoxication was a feeling that ***I was at last fulfilling my destiny***. . . . Yes, I felt satisfied, as though I were at length of some use, as though I were ***doing my duty***. . . . I responded to the progressive impatience of those hungry men by a similar impatience on my own account. It was as though I recognised a supreme form of love, as ferocious as that of the insect—the mantis, isn’t it?—which devours its mate. . . . With the difference that I was playing the part of the male mantis. It was I who was going to be devoured. . . .

“I knew what was going to happen. The dancing circle closed in upon me. Every moment all those white teeth gleamed nearer and nearer to me. They made me get up. Two of them held me with my arms outspread. I was sure that they were going to bite my wrists first, to drink my blood; and I was looking forward to that biting, in a state of beatitude such as no husband’s caresses had ever revealed to me. . . .

“It was at this moment that Gonzalez came back. I suppose he had got scared by the inquiries which followed my disappearance. For my part, I had been outside Time and Space for several days. But at Havana, as luck would have it, my absence had been noticed. Some other Americans, staying at the same hotel, got in touch with our Legation.

“Did I say luck? At the moment it meant a terrible torture, a terrible disappointment to me. . . . All that happened was that Gonzalez appeared beside me; and he was leading a she-goat, a real, living goat: a white one, with no horns. According to the religion of the ***gnagnigos,*** that sufficed to make me untouchable: ***the animal was sub-***

stituted for me in the sacrifice. All the magnetic consecration of the dance passed into it. As for me, from the point of view of ritual I was eliminated. Indeed, I had to be taken out of the temple quickly, very quickly, on pain of a terrible vengeance by the gods.

"Gonzalez put me on his horse, and then into a car. I returned to civilisation. What I suffered, when the drug ceased to act as an anaesthetic, was simply abominable. I was ill for weeks, with my stomach feeling as though I had been flayed alive, and my legs gone from under me. But the most cruel thing of all was my regret at missing that deadly, superhuman happiness. . . .

"That's why Whites leave me cold; and that's why I found the Hawaiians too gentle. . . ."

She drank a third eau-de-Cologne highball—90 per cent under proof!

"I see now," said I, thoughtfully, "why you needed a 'kick' to make me tell you about your incarnation as a goddess. . . ."

"Really an odd experience, wasn't it?" she replied. "But, if you're interested in stories about the Blacks, I'll introduce you to a Californian quadroon who is on board, in the second-class. He's whiter to look at than you are; and yet he's a Negro. His father is as black as my shoe."

CHAPTER II

SCOTTSBORO: A NEGRO TRAGEDY

I

PENSIVELY, through my port-hole, I stared at grey houses on a brown, rocky coast. The sullen sea matched the sky overhead. The boats in between the land and the ship were no longer canoes, but ugly motor-boats.

"Good-bye to the Tropics!" I reflected.

Somebody opened my cabin-door. A tall, good-looking fellow came in and greeted me with a smile. He was very well dressed, with black hair shining with oil, and a complexion as fair as a lily. He was the "Negro" in the second-class, an exceptionally pale-faced quadroon. Social life, indeed, is just a continual passage from one acquaintanceship to another. A writer's process of documentation is often just the same thing; and that is its most pleasant side.

"Excuse me," said Rodney. "I've come because I must say goodbye to you. In a quarter of an hour we shall be in America. After that, you'd better not know me."

"Indeed!" said I. "And why?"

He laid his forefinger on a large printed sheet which was lying on top of my baggage.

"Because of that, my European friend: the questionnaire which passengers have to answer for the American immigration authorities. For that matter, you'll find them much less inquisitive than your newspapers sometimes say."

He bent over the document and went on:

"Of course, if you're going to begin by giving them seditious answers. . . ."

"What do you mean?"

"Under the heading 'Nationality,' you've written 'French.' So far, so good. But then, under the heading 'Race,' you've again written ' French.' "

"Well, what's wrong with that? I come of old French stock. To be precise, I'm a Burgundian."

"In the United States, a race means ***a colour***. And there are only two answers you can put down: 'W' or 'C.' "

"Meaning '***White***' or '***Coloured***'?"

"Yes, ***White***," he repeated, rather plaintively, despite himself. "Pure Caucasian White—that's what ***you*** can write if you like, sir. Just put down a 'W,' and you won't have any trouble in getting off the ship. . . . As for me, here's my declaration form: I've put down what ***I'm bound to put***."

On the document he showed me, I saw—and I was quite moved to see it—the letter 'C': standing for "***Coloured man***." I looked Rodney straight in the face.

"But still," I said, "it's quite imperceptible."

"It may be to you; but then you haven't been brought up with the hereditary prejudice of our Southern Whites. In Asia, too, I'm often taken for a Caucasian. I've even had the experience of overhearing people who didn't know me insult Negroes in my presence; and they were astounded when I got indignant. But in America, apart from the sensitiveness of people's eyes, which would give me away at once, I have a particular reason for confessing, and indeed claiming, kinship with my own great clan. My father—and nobody could mistake him for anything else but a Negro—is a

leader of the 'African America' movement which has now taken the place of the pan-African movement."

" 'African America'? Does he aspire to impose the climate of Timbuctu on New York?"

"His aspirations, his hopes may be no more than dreams. . . . But I am his son, and his dreams bind me, even though I am ***all but*** White. . . ."

"It's extraordinary, the change in you from one generation to the next."

"You get the reverse of it, too. I may have a child who will be very dark, especially if . . . if I don't marry a White woman. . . ."

His voice trembled with humiliated pride. "***A White woman***!" It was precisely in order to hear that magical phrase, spoken in such a way, that I was on my travels.

"In France," I remarked, "any girl who fell in love with you could marry you."

"But in the United States she couldn't."

He hastened to add—and I'm sure it wasn't for fear of our being overheard, with the immigration officers already on board the ship:

"Such is America; and I take her as she is. I put up with having to travel in special coaches on the trains. I'm more submissive than my father—perhaps just because I'm nearer to the Whites. If we had the same status for everybody, I should be delighted, of course. . . . But I know that's too good to be true. I know it's impossible. And, since you're going to study this question, you'll find that out for yourself."

"I'll do my best."

He came closer to me. He was honestly anxious about me.

"Take my advice, once you're on shore," he urged me. "I've told you ever since our first conversation. . . . This idea of yours—that 'the Coloured men have discovered the White woman'—is quite right; and the fact that it's so upsetting makes it all the more interesting. But, in the eyes of 100 per cent Americans, it's simply a scabrous idea. If you insist on talking about it, they'll take you for a criminal."

"Even if I talk about it ***with understanding***?"

"They still won't understand you. It's a prohibited sphere. Don't touch it with a barge-pole! . . .

"I beg your pardon. If this investigation of mine were confined to the American aspect of the problem, your country would be quite entitled to say to me: 'Don't interfere in ***our*** affairs.' But I happen to be French; and what I'm thinking about is the present-day position of Coloured and White in France: in that greater France which extends over Europe, Indo-China, North-West Africa, and the West Indies. In America I'm simply looking out for points of comparison, just as I've done in Batavia or in Seoul. . . ."

I added, with a laugh:

"If I published the results of my investigation, would they lynch me on my return to the United States?"

"They sometimes lynch Whites, too," he replied, quite seriously. "I don't suppose they'd lynch you; but it's quite likely that in such a case you would be refused admission."

"I have too high an opinion of the United States to believe that," I replied. "Besides, I should do my best to be fair."

"Well," said he, suddenly making up his mind that there was no dissuading me, "if you want to realise how high feeling runs over the question, you couldn't have chosen a better moment. You've just witnessed the Massie trial in Hawaii. That's no more than a colonial side-show. Here's something more important. On March 25, 1931, nine Negroes are alleged to have outraged two White women near Scottsboro, a little

town in the very heart of the United States. On April 9 eight of them were condemned to death."

"I've heard about that."

"In March, 1932, the Supreme Court of Alabama confirmed seven of these death-sentences. The two who were spared were really too young—mere boys. According to letters I have received, such is the present position. Now, these men under sentence of death are absolutely innocent. Even the prosecution and the jury all but admit that they are! Unfortunately, the Communist party has taken a hand in the case. Hitherto it was only a matter of internal policy, an incident in the struggle between the Whites of the South and ourselves, their sometime slaves. At a pinch, with the North-East on our side, there might have been some kind of compromise. The Southerners wanted to make an example in order to intimidate their Negroes; but the Easterners wouldn't have let them. Now, however, the International Labour Defence organisation is mobilising its advocates on behalf of Paterson and the other condemned men, and getting up demonstrations of protest in Washington. That's going to turn a good many neutrals against us, and will make us lose a good many friends. Still, there are fourteen million of us American Negroes. We ought to be a force to reckon with."

Hearing that "pale face" say "us Negroes" made me feel both embarrassed and compassionate. The word "Black" was beginning to be associated in my ears with the clink of chains.

"I suppose your father is interesting himself in the case?" I asked.

"Of course. He would lay down his life if necessary. But it is so hard for us to defend ourselves. ***We are the most helpless race on earth***."

Then, after a silence, I said:

"Will you introduce me to your father and your friends? I should like to probe this Scottsboro case to the bottom."

He hesitated. Through the hull of the ship came the throb of the engines, suddenly slowed down, then faster again. The alley-way became full of footsteps and voices. Rodney leant out of the porthole.

"The Golden Gate. We shall have to go up to the saloon."

Then he turned to me.

"I'll introduce you if you like. . . . But anything you write about this question will come back here. Anybody you've interrogated, if you mention him by name, will be made to pay on your account, even if you personally remain outside the battle. Negroes have been lynched for less than that. . . ."

"Thanks for giving me this opportunity of telling you something," I replied. "I promise you that in this case, just as I did in ***The Road to Shanghai***, I shall be careful to disguise my portraits from life and I shall not mention any real names, so that my informants may be fully safeguarded. And now I count on seeing you again."

He shook hands with me.

"But mind you," I wound up, "I shall inform myself about the other side from your adversaries. And also I shall not ignore the fact that, while I am French first of all, I am a White, too."

"Even if you did ignore it," said he resignedly, "***we*** shouldn't be likely to forget it."

Somebody knocked. It was the cabin-steward, a Chinese. He looked askance at my guest, the quadroon, as though he were surprised to see him there, outside his own class.

"Passengers please assemble in the main saloon with passports and immigration papers," he recited. "Hurry along, please. . . ."

“I don’t see any reason why I shouldn’t be seen in your company,” said I to Rodney, “since we all assemble together.”

“This happens to be the one case in which I am permitted to associate with the first-class passengers!”

We went up. First-class and second-class passengers assembled in the luxurious saloon around the immigration officer, a fine fat detective in a khaki tunic, who looked good-humoured enough. His florid nose showed that he was far from “dry.” Let me make a point of saying that I had no trouble whatever. So far as I was concerned, the United States treated me, on this as on every other occasion, in the most straightforward and considerate way.[1]

But a considerable time elapsed before my name was called. Meanwhile Rodney drew me aside into the bay of a window. He had been thinking things over.

“I can tell you something to start with about Scottsboro. . . .”

He had a final fit of cautiousness.

“You really will disguise our secrets, won’t you? You’ll bear in mind the danger involved for us? Very well. Then I repeat that the innocence of the condemned men is so clear that it is scarcely worth discussing. With every fresh fact that is brought to light, we feel that there is more sympathy on our side, despite the handicap that the Communists have taken up the case. Jewish Rabbis, Catholic priests, clergymen of different denominations know or guess the truth, and they give us their support. So do even some Southern planters. They have enough humanity, enough goodwill and enough common sense to shrink from manufacturing martyrs.

“In the South, you know, plenty of Whites treat the Blacks with a kind of paternal patronage, ***so long as they’re not afraid of them***. Before the case of the Scottsboro nine, other Negroes in this very same region, charged with real, flagrant outrages, were saved from the electric chair or from lynching by juries in their normal frame of mind. But this time politics carried the day; and the scale of the scandal has exasperated the people of Alabama. That’s what will kill Paterson and his comrades if they are executed. Such is our America: humane, but inflexible. . . .”

“All right,” said I. “We haven’t got much time. Subject to verification, I’ll admit that these men are as innocent as you say. What else have I got to discover?”

“You ought to go and see for yourself how our lower-class Blacks live. Even if you find their jargon hard to understand, they’ll explain themselves to you by their appearance and their actions. They’re much more profound that some people think, but it all comes out on the surface. It’s the very mark of the Negro that there’s ***nothing abstract*** about him.”

“I’ll go and have a look at them. But what about the Scottsboro case itself?”

“If you could have a talk with those Negroes, the ones who were on that unlucky goods-train. . . .”

“But they’re in prison, aren’t they? I doubt whether I could get authorisation to visit them. Even if I could, I should find them overwhelmed, prostrated by their prison experience.”

“But suppose I could manage to let you see other men ***who were with them*** . . . not in prison . . . free, but in hiding?”

“How do you mean—free? Surely none of the nine has been released, not even the two boys?”

“***There weren’t nine of them***: ***there were twelve***,” Rodney whispered.

“What, at Scottsboro?”

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[1] I should like to emphasise this again to-day—1936—now that I have disembarked nine times in all on United States territory, mainland or colonial, without the slightest annoyance.

"No, but before they got there, on the Southern Railroad train on which the two White girls and two White railwaymen unfortunately happened to be travelling, too—without tickets."

"How did the Negroes come to be on this train?"

"They hadn't any right to be on it either. It was only a goods-train. But, apart from the twelve men of my race, there were also already on board it five Whites, who had smuggled themselves into what we call a 'gondola car,' an open truck for transporting coal and other freight."

"Twelve and five, that makes seventeen; and four more—twenty-one altogether! Why," I cried, "such a thing would make our French brakesmen burst with indignation!"

"Well, life may be hard in America; but it has also preserved an element of licence, an element of the picturesque, which dates back to the pioneering days."

"Where exactly did they all meet, these twenty-one train-jumpers, Black and White, male and female?"

"At Chattanooga goods station, where the train stopped to pick up water. The five Whites were already squabbling with the twelve Blacks—over the best places in the truck, or something equally trivial. The arrival of the new-comers didn't help matters. The train started again. The dispute turned into a fight, and the Blacks got the upper hand. When the train slowed down once more, at a place called Stevenson, they compelled the five Whites who were in the truck first ***and one of the companions of the two women*** to jump out on to the track. One White man, together with the two White girls, was left alone with them. This White, Patterson and the other Negroes declared, ***was a witness of everything that happened*** up to the time of their arrest. But he didn't give evidence in court. . . ."

"And you mean to say he was in a position to deny the whole story of the outrage? Do you know who he is? Have you unearthed him?"

"Not yet."[1]

"But why did these Negroes of yours keep one White man ***and the two White women*** on board the truck?" I asked, struck by the point. "Doesn't that look suspicious, to say the least?"

"It's quite simply explained. The train was gathering speed. The Negroes let these Whites stay on board out of sheer kindness of heart, for fear they might break their necks. At the same time, the Negroes were afraid that the men they'd expelled from the truck would inform the police about them by way of revenge; and in fact they did. So the Negroes watched for a chance of dropping off the train themselves. ***Three of them managed to do so***. The other nine were not so lucky, and they were all arrested at Paint Rock, Jackson County, Alabama."

"Then what became of those three?"

"The prosecution didn't want any further embarrassment. No serious search was made for the three missing men."

"They're in hiding?"

"They're fellows in very humble circumstances. . . . I was thinking of getting you to see at least one of them. . . ."

"There's nothing I should like better. Where and how?"

"You'll see how two years in uplifting surroundings have made a new man of him—while his companions have been vegetating or getting still more demoralised in

[1] This statement by Rodney was confirmed at the second trial, in 1933.

prison. But . . . be careful about him. Remember that ***he's potentially condemned to death***—just like Patterson and six others. . . ."

So it came about that, two weeks later, I found myself in the American South, with its wonderful spring, among the Blacks, singing in the April sun as they planted cotton along the great Mississippi.

II

High and square as they used to be manufactured before the Deluge, that little old, old Ford nevertheless carried us along the straight road, the clergyman and myself.

America is the country of cars for everybody. It is also a country great enough to put utility before ridicule. Those who cannot possess the latest make of car prefer one which we should laugh at in Europe to none at all; and that good man, the Rev. Mr. Hopkins, was the last man in the world to worry about being in the fashion.

The only thing that concerned him was the inner splendour of the soul. Now that I have had the privilege of meeting this true evangelist, together with several other clergymen no less human and kind-hearted (such as my friend Albert in Chicago), I shall always defend the American churches against the charge of being lukewarm or mercenary.

"These are all cotton-fields," my reverend host told me, accelerating like a maniac. "Here they've already planted. There they're still digging. It all depends on the soil—and the planter's energy. . . ."

Cotton was king indeed. White flakes of it blew into my mouth and made me cough whenever we passed one of the barns where Negroes were handling bales bursting with the precious cottonwool, the last crop. As far as I could see, the flat landscape, rather like a more southerly Beauce, belonged to cotton: moderately large fields, surrounded by green trees, under plough by a yoke of mules, or even a yoke of oxen, as in France. But here all the ploughmen were Blacks.

Other Negroes were bending over the young plants. Others again, at leisure, amid their brown, nearly naked children, gazed at us from the doors of their wooden huts, with porches and overhanging roofs of rusty sheet-iron: poverty-stricken dwellings which reminded me of ***Uncle Tom's Cabin***.

The few Whites we saw were not in the plantations, but on the road, in cars like ourselves or on horseback. Some of them, in their old coats and their old wide-brimmed hats, did not look very well off either. But even they, when they happened to meet a Negro better dressed than themselves, glanced at him superciliously, clearly showing that their pride of race offset their poverty. This was the South, the Mississippi State! Far beyond the horizon to our left lay the giant river, like a yellowish flood.

"We're nearly there," said Hopkins. "You see that steeple? That's the village. The mission chapel is half a mile on the other side. Your visit will alarm my dear friend Mrs. Woollyball. You wait outside and let me go in first."

We drove through a typical little township: factory, station, stores, cinema; a few better-class houses in the Colonial architectural style, with close-cropped lawns in front of them and a belt of timber sheltering them; and then plenty of wretched shacks. We came to Mrs. Woollyball's, and I waited outside in the Ford.

In order to cover the Scottsboro trial in this chapter, I am putting this trip, which I took in between two trains, out of its proper chronological order. Let me make it clear that by this time I had got over a new-comer's first surprises. I was by now aware

that, while mechanical toil and poverty may adopt forms different from those of Europe, nevertheless plenty of them are to be found in the United States, side by side with miracles of machinery and skyscrapers.

How lamentable, how ugly, how unhealthy, how degenerate were those Black Southern villagers! Those poor descendants of slaves certainly showed little resemblance to the French Negroes whom I had seen in Africa, or to the arrogant jazz musicians. As I looked at them around me, in all their squalor, I could understand in my own person the Whites' repugnance for them.

There was no doubt about it that these uncouth creatures were retrograding towards the brute. The mere thought of their touching any refined American girls, so many of whom I had already admired, was an outrage on good taste and common sense. Cross-breeding with them? What a horrible, what a criminal idea! . . . But, on the other hand, ***how had the picked physical specimens imported by the slave-dealers become reduced to this herd***, so vainly freed?

I perceived the thin figure of Hopkins in his black coat at the corner of the wall. He signalled to me to join him, and I hastened to escape from my depressing solitude. His bony face, crowned with disorderly grey hair, was beaming with delight.

"It's all right. I've told her all about you."

Mrs. Woollyball's negrophile mission occupied two big shacks right at the end of the village. One of them served as dwelling-house, and the other as chapel. The latter consisted of four bare walls, a few rough benches, a harmonium, and a few texts introducing Biblical names, such as Hebron, Siloam and Bethlehem. But, once I made the acquaintance of the evangelist herself, I had to concede her the power of transforming the humblest setting by the flame of her charity.

Mrs. Woollyball was an elderly American White woman, with a wonderfully peaceful and cheerful face, wearing a straight blue tunic of almost military cut. As I looked at her and Mr. Hopkins, both of them with the same leathery features and the same haloes of hair, it struck me that they seemed like a predestined married couple. But Mrs. Woollyball was the wife of a much more astonishing marriage.

She showed us into her kitchen, with its roughly carpentered table, on which she laid two extra places for us, and apologised for asking me to lunch on maize bread and smoked fish.

"It's our usual fare. I wish I'd known you were coming. . . . Sam has gone to the village, and I could have got him to buy some meat."

"This gentleman has come to listen to you, not to eat," said Hopkins.

She burst into a very hearty laugh, which belied her confusion over her modest fare, and proceeded to open some bottles of soda-water. We drank it "straight."

"Sam will be back at any moment," she said, "but let's start lunch meanwhile. He'd never sit down to table with a strange gentleman. And he's quite right, too! If anybody found him doing it, there'd be trouble. But when he's alone with me, he can. Theoretically he's my servant; but everybody knows he's my spiritual son, too. Though the truth of the matter is that he's much nearer to God than I am, isn't he, Mr. Hopkins? . . ."

"Tell this French gentleman about your life," replied the clergyman.

"About my life? What will he think of me?"

"He'll think you an eccentric," said Hopkins, with affectionate humour.

On the contrary, with these people I felt myself to be on a plane where my "worldly wisdom" seemed odd and abnormal.

Mrs. Woollyball got out of telling me about her life by fussing over serving lunch, and then by giving Hopkins all the latest news about her little religious community.

"Big Clem has left us: his master didn't approve of his coming to us. But on the other hand we've got two recruits, and fine singers, too: Neddy Summer and Rosamund Elshin—you know, that tall, rather pale-complexioned girl. Last night we had a fine meeting on the text: 'I have received a goodly heritage.' . . ."

At this point Mr. Hopkins lost patience. He sat down authoritatively on a stool, and, just as though he were encouraging a child to repeat her lesson, he began:

"You were brought up as a girl at Lexington, Georgia. And what happened then?"

The missioner folded her hands, and started gazing into her past instead of looking at us.

"Both my parents died. They left me a little money. I was young, and not yet enlightened by religion. But I dreamed about a purely sentimental love. Young men of my own White race struck me as materialists, who cared for nothing but making money. I didn't like their contempt for the poor Negroes, either. . . . I couldn't help keeping on worrying about the lot of the Negroes, ***all the more so because***, ***like all girls of my class***, ***I had been brought up to be afraid of them***. But, instead of being afraid of them, I felt sorry for them. When I looked at some old Negroes, the resigned way in which they smiled went straight to my heart. . . . Then I met a young Negro, very gentle and very shy, poor fellow. . . . I made up my mind to marry him."

"And you still bear his humble name, Beckie," put in Hopkins.

Mrs. Woollyball nodded. Her memories made her look younger and prettier.

"I got him to go away East with me," she went on. "I couldn't marry him anywhere else. It was a complete, perfect union. It was real happiness! And I know now that I could never have been so blessed if I had married anybody else."

"Although he was a Black and you were a White," Hopkins emphasised.

"It was ***just because he was a Negro*** that we meant what we did to each other," she retorted. "What does the colour of one's skin matter? Souls are clear as crystal. . . ."

"And what happened then, Mrs. Woollyball?"

"We were sometimes insulted in the East. But on the whole we were left alone. Then Jasper was left some money; and besides, we longed for our Southern sun. So we came back. They threatened us. Like a fool, I didn't believe in their threats. . . . And then ***they*** killed my Jasper."

A spasm passed over her face; but her eyes remained dry, though she kept them on the ground.

"And you had been happy with him?" I asked, more surprised than upset.

"For six whole years," she replied. "Never a single quarrel, never a single disagreement between us. We twain were one heart and one flesh."

"A marriage exceptionally blessed, indeed," said Hopkins. "And then what happened?"

"Despair led me into my present path. I answered Jasper's murderers by devoting myself to helping all Blacks. Since then I've run five missions, often amid the greatest difficulties. Once some Whites kidnapped me and beat me. Twice my chapels were set on fire. Planters refused to employ my Negro brethren. Then, in the long run, when they saw that they would have to kill me, too, if they wanted to stop me—and besides, I was getting older—they just ignored me. Except for Mr. Hopkins, who comes to see me sometimes, no White knows me any more. . . ."

"But you don't preach revolt to the Negroes, do you?" I asked; and I was at once sorry I had said it.

"I?" replied Mrs. Woollyball, not offended in the least. "I don't preach anything to them. I just sing with them, in a communion of souls. You'll see for yourself, later on. . . . Oh, here's Sam!"

All at once the doorway framed a very dark Negro, not more than twenty at the most, and very ugly, like most of the American Black plebs. A grey jumper covered his thick-set body and a patched pair of trousers his too-long legs. His woolly cranium ran straight back, with next to no forehead. His chin seemed to be swallowed up under the kind of reddish trumpet which marked his mouth. His prominent cheek-bones looked like a box knocked out of shape, and his yellow eyes swam in their sockets. Such, as I saw him, was poor Sam, saved from the luckless Scottsboro truck to sing the praises of the Lord.

"Come in, my son," said Mr. Hopkins. "Let me introduce you to this gentleman; and tell him how I met you, down and out, Fort Payne way. I met Sam," he went on to explain, "in the course of my work as a 'hobo minister.' "

"Yeah, sah," said Sam, scared out of his wits, as he rolled his hat in his hands and his thick neck on his orang-outang's body.

I had gone there to question him. I looked at him; I was cut to the heart; and on the spot I gave up any idea of interrogating him. His appearance—doubtless just like the appearance of the condemned men who had been less lucky—betokened such a condition of infantile degeneracy that he might have been either innocent or guilty of the alleged outrage; but in neither case could he be regarded as responsible for his actions. And that, to my mind, is the conclusion to be drawn from the whole Scottsboro case.

"And so," I nevertheless asked, after an awkward pause, "Sam was on that luckless train from Chattanooga onwards? And he managed to jump out on the line?"

"Just before the police arrested your poor comrades at Paint Rock, wasn't it, Sammy?" Mr. Hopkins prompted.

"Yeah, sah."

"Ask him whether he witnessed any outrage on the White women," I persisted, conscientiously.

Hopkins translated my question into terms intelligible to the Negro. The moment I mentioned those two names, Sam started staring at me with a purely animal expression.

"No, Sah, nothin' 'tall, nobody hurt 'em any," he stammered. I could see he was on the point of bursting into tears.

"All of them denied it from the outset," observed Mrs. Woollyball with the air of a mother, indignant at her children being tormented.

Hesitatingly, almost in a whisper, Sam said something to Mr. Hopkins.

"He's repeating what he's always said," Hopkins translated. "A White, a railwayman of about his own age, got into the truck with the two women; and he stayed there until Sam himself dropped off. That eye-witness's testimony should have disposed of the whole case; but he didn't appear at the trial at Scottsboro. . . ."

We became silent. I hadn't much appetite left for the smoked fish.

The Negro moved away behind me. I felt that he was going to squat down and make himself as inconspicuous as possible in a corner of the shack. A little later, I looked round, cautiously. As I expected, I surprised him staring at me, with his back bowed, his mouth gaping and his eyes starting out of his head more than ever from fright.

He did not stir when I looked straight at him. But apparently now, for the first time, he made up his mind that I was not an enemy. For his face lost its tension. He

smiled ***like a man***. On that mournful face of his, bestiality turned all at once into gentleness, almost intelligence and charm.

"Sam, it's noon!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Woollyball. "You can have your lunch later on. Go to the chapel and welcome our brethren, if any of them come for the midday prayers."

Sam sprang to his feet, glad of the chance to get up from his haunches; and I expect he breathed more freely once he was outside and delivered from the mystery of my presence. Mr. Hopkins and our hostess did not make any comment, but left me to brood over my impressions. A few minutes passed. Then we heard the ring of an ordinary electric bell, followed by a few chords awkwardly struck on a harmonium. Mrs. Woollyball stood up.

"My friend has to catch a train," said Mr. Hopkins, "so we'll only be able just to have a look at the service."

All at once I wanted to be able to stay longer. In the chapel with its rough benches there were now a dozen Negroes, men and women, old and young: a kind of cross-section of the accursed people in this Ark aground on White soil. They were singing, under Sam's leadership. Sam himself had turned into ***a creature of song***, a tearful ***vox humana***, an expression of our common distress so authentic in its simplicity that tears came to my eyes.

All the Negroes were singing. They swayed in harmony with the music; and they looked frightful or comical sights, such as animals never look, for animals are more purely instinctive and not, like these creatures, spoiled by social life. But their wretchedness engendered a potent emotion. I thought of those monstrosities in ***The Island of Doctor Moreau***, born of a Wellsian nightmare. . . . And I thought, too, of the mystical madness of the Hallelujah spirit in this same country of cotton, the Mississippi of the "Blues" and Jack Hylton.

Mrs. Woollyball's congregation certainly lacked the artistry of the "stars" of the Harlem cabarets. But they had sincerity, they had faith. Here was an ardent aspiration for uplift. Here was all the immense, inarticulate cry of the Negroes, so lonely, so abased, so bereaved in this hard world here below.

The White woman, Mrs. Woollyball, joined her voice to theirs: the harsh, nasal voice of an American old woman. Nevertheless, it harmonised with the wails of the Negroes in minor key—so much so that, in that one moment, I understood what a bond of disappointment and hope, of superstition and mysticism, existed between her and them.

"It's time for us to be going," Hopkins reminded me.

We went back to our antique Ford, and to the straight strip of tarred road in the midst of the ploughed fields. A truly Biblical flood descended from the heavy sky. It rattled on the roof and the windscreen of our heroic vehicle, and filled all the ditches full of livid mud in a moment. The Negroes went on with their work just the same as before, with their streaming coats and shirts clinging to their bodies.

We were on the station platform, with the Memphis express blowing off steam beside us: Pullman cars for the Whites, "Jim Crow" cars for the Coloured people. Gratefully, respectfully, I shook hands with the "hobo minister," the friend of all down-and-outs of whatever colour.

"You know," my companion of that day said to me, by way of a parting gift, "***authority should never create martyrs***—not even the most abject of martyrs. They have only one revenge, it is true. But they have at least that revenge; and it is worth more than any other. ***Their revenge is that they attract affection***. . . ."

CHAPTER III

THE TREASURE OF THE WHITE RACE

I

"NOBODY will come now," said Binh. "I'm going to call it a day."

How charming was spring in California—even on the fifteenth floor of the skyscraper in which the Trade Bureau of Indo-China occupied a modest suite of offices! Doubtless Binh the Annamite and myself were able to fraternise all the more easily by virtue of that blessing in which all mankind could share: the golden warmth of sunset streaming through the windows, bearing with it the scent of flower-fields and the sharp tang of the sea.

"Let's go down together, Mr. Binh," I suggested, politely. "You know the city well by now. Won't you act as my pilot?"

"Oh, certainly," he replied, "I shall be delighted, if you think I can be of any use to you."

He put on his waisted overcoat and his smart felt hat, and we set off, strolling along the streets laid out in great blocks around Market Street: the heart of 'Frisco, now at its most animated hour.

The evening was still wonderfully clear. By craning my neck, I could see the top of the great buildings, at whose foot we were walking, all bathed in sunlight. Mr. Binh, for his part, declined to compromise his dignity by any such gymnastics. Small and solemn beside me, like a regular Asiatic prince, he watched his step to the extent of keeping his eyes on the ground. Without thinking, I chaffed him:

"Don't you want to look at all these pretty American girls?"

He glanced at me sideways, darkly, beseechingly, as though I had stung his most secret and most sore spot.

"Sir," he replied after a moment or two, "I may look upon you as my friend?"

"Of course you can, Binh!"

"Have you ever wondered what may be the feelings of a man like myself, belonging to a . . . a non-White race, when he is suddenly transported from his native country to a city like this?"

It was my turn to be disconcerted.

"You remember Hué, don't you?" he went on significantly.

"Yes, I remember Hué. . . ."

Hué, the ancient capital of Annam, now under French protectorate—it was there that we had first met. Mr. Binh, after a brilliant career as a student, had just entered the civil service. Our distinguished Resident M. Yves C. Chatel, had singled him out as a picked man and nominated him for his present important post as secretary of the Trade Bureau in California. I recalled the imperial palaces, with their horned roofs copied from Pekin; the "River of Perfumes," with its decked sampans-like gondolas and its mysterious villas of mandarins on its luxuriant banks; and then the narrow streets, with their discreet little houses, and the rickshaws with their closed hoods. An age-old world, and a shy one. . . .

"Not so long ago," said Binh, as though he were following my train of thought, "when a respectable woman among us ***had to go out*** in public, she asked her husband's or her mother's permission. And then she got into a carrying-chair with leather curtains, just like a hermetically sealed box. Nobody could see her."

"***Nobody could see her***!" I repeated. "Obviously it's very much the other way about here. . . . Do you know, Binh, after spending some months in the Far East I am almost as much struck as you are by this difference of custom?"

We had come to a halt at the tramway-stop at the corner of Geary Street. The spectacle which presented itself to us indeed contrasted in a very striking way with the picturesque, but unattractive human swarm in Asiatic cities: even Europeanised ones like Shanghai or Tokio.

Out there, such feminine figures as the stroller could see belonged to the lowest class among the natives, and their forms were shrouded in tunics and trousers of coarse material. A White woman in fashionable attire struck you as an anomaly ***of no importance***. The streets might belong to coolies, beggars or police. They certainly did not belong to women.

But here—here offices were releasing into the lovely evening a regular army of typists; and at the same hour Society women were leaving beauty-parlours for their dressmaker's or their clubs. All around us flowed a stream of fair women, all of them young at least in appearance, all of them splendidly sculptured.

Whether they were getting out of twelve-cylinder motor-cars or besieging the democratic tram, women rich and poor alike exhibited themselves in skirts fitting tightly to their hips and blouses moulding their breasts. No veil hid that which—as Islam understands—most potently provokes the desire of men. They were naked, though by no means unadorned, the faces of these American goddesses.

Yes, goddesses, I say. They had all the classical perfection; and also all its indifference—compounded of pride, sovereignty, and boredom, too. They were the Venuses, the Junos, the Minervas, the Dianas of a modern Olympus manufactured in the United States, by dint of physical culture. But, I ask you—Venuses by the hundred, Dianas by the thousand! They seemed to spring out of the pavement in droves; and any number of others like them were passing by all the time. Really, it was too much of a good thing!

"Binh," I said, you don't know Paris yet, do you? But you've heard of the famous Rue de la Paix and the Champs-Élysées. . . . Well, I'm a Parisian; and so far I always thought that my own city possessed more pretty girls than any other city in the world. But I'm bound to say that I've never seen so many all at once as right here on Market Street in San Francisco!"

"But surely there are still plenty in Paris?" asked the Annamite, with all the touchy pride of a neo-Frenchman.

"Oh, yes, of course, any number of them. And they're sprightlier, smarter, more piquant, even if they're not so athletic. They're ***Parisians***—it's a word you can't define: it conveys something unique. But California doesn't compare so badly in its own line! I say, Binh, just look at that tall red-haired girl in the jade-green tailor-made suit! And what about that pretty platinum-blonde—and those two sisters? . . . They've all got the bursting health of an animal, and faces like innocent angels. What a country this America is! The hotch-potch of her immigrants has flowered like a bed of roses."

"In Asia," Binh remarked with emphasis, "not even the most famous courtesan is so clever at adorning herself as the least expert of these White women."

"You're quite right, my dear Binh. I've visited the 'Street of Happiness' in Macao, the Chung-tong district in Canton, and the Fu-tze-miang in Nankin, not to speak of quite a number of ***yoshivaras***. Speaking quite impartially, I must say I found all the ladies there decidedly novices in the art of attraction. Of course I'm a chaste person, and I can speak of them only from their appearance. I dare say you've had opportunity of studying them more closely from the point of view of the art of love. You're a Son

of Heaven, a member of the honourable Yellow race. I wish you'd give me a straight answer to a question which interests me very much. I've already put it to quite a number of your racial brethren. . . . ***If you were given your choice*** between the most dazzling White woman and any ordinary Asiatic woman, wouldn't you choose the latter, from a perfectly natural racial preference? Isn't a woman ***belonging to a different race*** out of court from the start from your point of view?"

He shook his head. I know how proud a man he was. I felt sure that he would tell me the truth.

"I wouldn't have the least objection to the White woman, if she'd have me," he replied, after a momentary hesitation.

"Have you tried, Binh?"

He didn't say he hadn't.

"But your grandfather, the Emperor Khai-Dinh's minister, ***would have refused even to try***, wouldn't he? He had a scathing contempt for all Westerners, hadn't he? What a change in your time!"

That remark of mine got Mr. Binh on the raw.

"We'd have gone on being quite content with our own Asiatic women," he retorted, "***if all you Whites yourselves hadn't taught us how much superior is the White woman***."

That silenced me. For this wasn't by any means the first time I had been told so. I had heard precisely the same retort from any number of other "Coloureds" whom I had questioned while I was collecting material for my ***Road to Shanghai***—and they, too, had confessed to me that they had experimented for themselves.

"I've read quite a number of your literary masterpieces," Binh went on, bitterly. "Rousseau, Zola. . . . What have they got to give me? A panegyric of Woman—***of the White Woman***. I've seen reproductions of your paintings: Botticelli, Titian, Rubens, Watteau, Greuze. The same shameless women all over again! Not to speak of your cinema—your 'stars.' . . ."

Words failed him to express what he thought of them. This feeling, too, I had experienced elsewhere.

"And then I came here. I strolled about the streets, just as I'm doing with you now. . . . I meet plenty of 'Coloured men': quite a number of Chinese and Japanese, but, above all, ***Blacks***—many more Blacks than Yellows. Of course, I'm not going to compare myself with a primitive Negro; but I know perfectly well that, in the eyes of Americans, all 'Coloured people' are one and the same. So, when I meet either Blacks or Yellows, we exchange glances with one another; and we're all thinking the same thing. . . ."

"And what do you think: that White women are beautiful?"

"We think they're shameless," he growled. "And we think that ***it's very wrong of White men to do everything they can to make us curious about White women***—particularly when they lynch us if we dare to lay so much as a finger on one of their women!"

"But you're all wrong, Binh," I protested. The man had quite upset me. "White men don't in the least want you to fall in love with their women. They simply let their women live in their own way. It never occurs to them that, in the streets of 'Frisco, or even in the depths of your own Asia, you are watching them. . . ."

"Maybe not. But the fact remains that we are watching them," he insisted. There was something threatening about him.

“Come, come!” said I. “You’re not going to ask these Californian women to wear masks and go about in sacks, just because there are a few thousand Yellows in Chinatown, and a few thousand Negroes in the Black quarter!”

Binh took me roughly by the arm and swung me round.

“You’d never see anything like that in our old Chinese cities!” he exclaimed. “But we Coloured can see it here.”

I confess I got a bit of a shock. Chance had brought us level with a ladies’ underwear shop; and, like all the other shops in the streets as darkness fell, it had just lit up its window. In that luxury shop-front, draped in velvet, the light fell, with Machiavellian frankness, upon life-size wax models, no less beautiful than the women passing by in the street—and all they were wearing was a red belt, a short vest, and a still briefer pair of “panties.”

Other enticing “undies” lay unfolded on cushions, in accordance with the technique of American window-dressers, who are out before all else to attract customers. Really, you might imagine yourself in a bedroom. . . . In Paris, any such apotheosis of lace and lawn would strike us as shamelessly inartistic. Our luxury trade is aristocratic, and it disdains any kind of parade. But in the United States, and for that matter in Berlin, this kind of thing is quite normal. Perhaps nations which are young, or those which are slow in the uptake, need to have their “i’s” dotted for them in this way.

Besides, among the citizens of the countries concerned nobody is corrupted. Nobody, indeed, pays much attention. Apart from Binh and myself, the only people interested in those brazen undies were San Franciscan ladies looking for a brassiere or a step-in. I, as a Frenchman, had no fears for my own virtue. But, in addition, there were Mr. Binh and all the Coloured—Yellow, Brown, Black. All at once I felt embarrassed, almost ashamed, just as though I had seen a relative of mine misbehaving in the presence of strangers. That relative of mine was ***my race***.

“Do you see?” murmured the Annamite. “These White women—is it we who run after them, or they who provoke, who tempt us? . . .”

I pleaded on behalf of that great family of mine:

“I beg your pardon, Binh. It’s all a matter of what is meant; and it’s what ***you*** mean that strikes me as rather reprehensible. Who the dickens asks you to start dreaming in the presence of this innocent exhibition of white—not of the White woman? You’re not a schoolboy any more. You’re a grown man. It’s only pathological cases who go mad over the sight of a skirt. . . . If the owner of this shop suspected your feelings, he wouldn’t have you lynched: he’d simply give you a shower-bath.”

Binh smiled politely, as Asiatics always do when they are bursting with resentment.

“Allow me to invite you to something,” he said, in a colourless tone of voice. “Before dinner, come with me and have a look at the ‘Burlesk’ a couple of blocks away. . . . Or have you been there already?”

“No, I haven’t. What is it?”

“It’s a music-hall, with non-stop performances from ten o’clock in the morning until two o’clock the next morning. I’m told that there are such places in all American cities, and several especially for ‘Coloured people’ in Chicago; but the artistes are always White women.”

The “Burlesk” was called the “ Napoli.” I got another little shock when I saw the front of it, which was decorated with huge enlargements of photographs, all representing very pretty girls wearing next to nothing. A thin veil draped around them saved them from the legal definition of indecency. On the other hand, their seraphic smiles were the very equation of “sex-appeal.”

"Do I have to be a pathological case, or a schoolboy," murmured Mr. Binh, "for that to mean something to me?"

"You're quite right," I agreed. "Thirty pictures like that, stuck up in one of the main streets of 'Frisco! In Paris, or even in Marseilles, places like this—supposing we have any—hide themselves away. They don't scandalise a whole street."

"Do me the honour of coming in with me," begged my Yellow friend.

He insisted on paying for two stalls; and I really believe that, seeing he was an Asiatic, they didn't give him back his right change. Then, once we got inside, he was authoritatively motioned upstairs to the gallery, while I, being one of the White lords of creation, was ushered into the stalls. I retraced my steps and, after a bit of an argument, joined Binh upstairs, in a gallery where almost all the audience were Coloured: Chinese, Filipinos, mulattoes or quite black Negroes.

There was nobody in the place except men, of course. There were more men downstairs—a fairly full house. The front rows were completely occupied. Over them from the stage ran a "bridge," such as is used at the quite respectable revues at the Folies Bergère or the Casino in Paris. Down below they were all Whites, and many of them were sailors. The American Pacific squadron was in the bay.

As it happened, a turn was just ending. Twelve girls were dancing a harmless ballet: neither less nor more undressed than among us. The curtains closed. Then a girl, really young and pretty—angelic and athletic as the typists whom we had seen earlier—came out of the wings by herself. She was wearing a ball-dress, clinging, but "correct." She waltzed on to the middle of the bridge.

The jazz band let its brass instruments out full blast—presumably in order to drown the shrill voice of the artiste, for she was singing some sentimental drivel or other. Nobody paid any attention to it. The audience were not there to listen, but to ***look***.

When she was right over the heads of the privileged spectators in the front rows, who were craning their necks and inhaling all the dust thrown up by her drumming heels, this Venus of the "Napoli" unfastened her dress and made it slide off her by means of a series of rhythmical wriggles: a kind of stomach-dance crossed with a most suggestive shimmy. The audience applauded frantically. The artiste kept on singing. She was now wearing nothing but rose silk "scanties" and a brassiere.

She proceeded to take off the latter superfluity. Next she turned her back on her delirious male audience, and with both hands slid off her silk scanties, which had hitherto remained last, but not least. Then she started jumping about again. . . .

Never in France, in any place not devoted to prostitution, had I seen so exact, so complete, so emphatic a representation of the intoxication which got Eve thrown out of Paradise.

I am no Puritan; but I should have felt mortified if an American or French woman had sat beside me and witnessed that exhibition.

"Well," murmured Mr. Binh, nudging me, "what can men of my Colour who are sitting here think—***and the Blacks***? Here is the White woman. Here is what she is—close up. . . ."

"No, no, Binh!" I protested. "This is just an ugly caricature. The real White woman has no relationship with poor girls like that. . . ."

But I was more ashamed, more anxious about my race than I was prepared to tell him.

II

"You're in luck," said my distinguished, delightful host, M. de B., the French Consul-General in California; "you'll meet all the pick of San Francisco Society."

Thanks to him, I had been invited to the most brilliant official and social event of the year in San Francisco: the George Washington Ball, an even smarter affair than our Bal des Petits Lits Blancs in Paris. It was held in the Civic Auditorium, which must be larger than the biggest hall in Paris: an enormous hall under a cupola, in no particular architectural style, decorated with immense hangings in blue and red.

The presence of the squadron in the bay had enabled the select company of dancers to be reinforced by a contingent of naval officers. What struck me as particularly American was the fact that a democratic, not to say lower-class, audience was admitted to galleries that ran round the dance-floor in the middle. Down below, on this floor, there was a perpetual procession of dancers in fancy-dress. The keynote of the ball was the Colonial period. So the men had revived the three-cornered hat of the planters and the leather accoutrements of the Grenadiers of La Fayette's time; while the ladies added a few "Creole" details to the conventional marchioness's get-up of wig and hoops.

Despite the more drab patches of modern uniforms and plain evening dress, the whole effect was very colourful and attractive. The athletic quality of the American race came out in the young naval officers, descendants of the privateers. As for the young married women and girls, the proportion of pretty and indeed ravishingly beautiful ones surpassed anything I have seen outside the United States.

I shared this impression with my host, M. de B.

"Yes," he replied, "it's a very fine result of European immigration after it has been through the melting-pot in accordance with the principle of leading a healthy, rational life. But nowadays educationalists are getting alarmed over some less wholesome tendencies. Prohibition has helped to aggravate hard drinking; and the financial crisis is weakening the old spirit of ***bona fide*** effort. . . ."

A little later, when we had sated ourselves with the spectacle and were leaving the Auditorium, he drew my attention to a few Japanese, sitting in silent attention in the back row of one of the galleries.

"There are some spectators perhaps not quite so disinterested as ourselves," he remarked. "This morning the ***Examiner*** flatly accused the Japanese tanker ***Kamoi*** of mooring at Pier 45 in order to spy on the fleet. Always this race-war!"

"And even a social event like this, even the question of women, are now part and parcel of it," I replied.

I thanked the Consul-General, and returned to the Saint Francis hotel a little after midnight. The Washington Ball was being prolonged there, in the sense that dancing was still going on and any number of people had come from the Auditorium to show off their costumes.

For a few moments longer I went on looking admiringly at these Americans, so sharply different from the French, and yet so close to me, like long-lost cousins. Fresh as I was from Asia, the beauty, the charm, the freedom that belong to White women alone struck me more than ever.

I thought of Mr. Binh, the Annamite, confessing how affected and, to put it plainly, how jealous he was in the presence of the regiment of White women in Market Street, when the White woman in her undies, and even without them, was revealed to him at the nearby "Burlesk," while at the same time the racial barrier prohibited

him from paying court to these demi-goddesses under penalty of being lynched. I reflected how our literature, our art, and above all our films constitute a propaganda dangerous in its initiation of the Yellow and Black races into the "sex-appeal" of the White woman. All this involved a rashness on one side, a pent-up resentment on the other, which might prove by no means negligible contributory causes of future inter-Continental conflicts, in which my own great colonising country would inevitably have to shed her blood.

The lift rushed me up to the ninth floor. In my bedroom, in pyjamas, I sat down to write up my diary in peace.

In peace, did I say? Ah, no! In the room next to mine, a gramophone was shrieking one of those "blues" which had already been dinned into my ears at the Auditorium. It kept on playing the same air all the time, as though its owner had only the one record. In addition, bursts of laughter and the shuffling of feet, together with a smell of bad brandy, or perhaps ether, filtered under the communicating door.

What kind of an orgy were these scoundrels next door perpetrating? In short, I lost the thread of my notes. Exasperated, I went and banged lustily on that accursed communicating door and shouted at the gramophone:

"Will you let me sleep? It's too late to be making all that row."

Almost on the spot, the door opened. I had assumed it was locked; but it wasn't. I stepped back, feeling pretty sure that some Californian merchant was going to make a rush for me, not so drunk that he couldn't see to hit.

Instead, I found a pretty little "Creole" marchioness bowing to me. In between her Marie Antoinette corsage and her white wig was the pure, pink and white face of an American girl under twenty-one. Her costume was a bit rumpled, and her wig a trifle askew. Yet there was nothing in the least shady or dubious about her.

"Well, what's the matter?" she asked me politely.

Behind her, through the smoke, under an electric light softened by a scarf wound round it, I could make out several figures—young men and girls—lying on the bed or sprawling in arm-chairs. There were one or two bottles, to be sure, and that infernal gramophone; but there was nothing vicious about this disorder. I was certainly in Anglo-Saxon territory.

"It's not my room," the marchioness explained, taking a step forward and closing the door behind her. "It belongs to Peter Mason, a midshipman. He and I and all the others were 'co-eds.' He took this room to throw a party for us, instead of going on board again. My name's Grace Blurb. I said I'd answer you, because I was the most vertical. The others have been downed by too much 'moonshine.' "

My bad temper was disarmed at once, of course. I was more concerned about receiving this nice girl so unexpectedly in my pyjamas. Obviously she belonged to good San Francisco society. I could have guessed that at sight, even without the fancy dress which showed that she had been at the Washington Ball. And when she described herself as "vertical," she was not deceiving me. Anything she had drunk had simply made her cheerful and a bit bold—no more.

I was still stammering, laughing despite myself, when she went on:

"How about you? Don't you feel out of it? Can I get you a drink?"

She returned to the other room and came back with a cocktail-shaker.

"I'll have one if you'll bring your own glass, Miss Blurb," said I.

"Well, why not? That gang in there aren't much fun, you know. They've drunk so much they've got nothing to say. I'd rather talk."

She sat down on a straight chair, and cocked her graceful legs, well hidden under her wide Louis XVI skirt, up on the side of my bed. She lit a cigarette, quite at ease.

For my part, I sat down again at my table, in front of my abandoned notes. I tasted the cocktail. It was abominable; but it was nice of Miss Grace to offer it to me. . . .

"If you're not going to be more talkative," she said, " I'll go back."

" I'm sorry ! But I'm a foreigner, and you're a girl. I'd rather you chose something to talk about that interests you."

She looked up at me.

"Oh, I'm interested in everything," she said.

"Indeed?"

"I've had a good education, you know—science, literature, history, philosophy, practical knowledge. I can cook, paint, ride and calculate how far away a star is. I can talk to you about Freud or your M. Proust, if you like; I've read both of them."

"America seems to know her job. How nice to be you, my dear young lady, on the threshold of life, so well equipped that you'll never be bored!"

She started so violently that I was afraid she would cut her lip on her glass.

"Bored?" she cried. "No, I never am—yet. I'm curious about everything, and my parents let me do what I like. When I don't like a place—Peter Mason's party, for example—I can always manage to get away from it. I've no ties, you know. I'm not married."

"Not yet; but you will be one day, I hope."

"I'm afraid of marriage," she replied, with real anxiety.

"Is it the . . . the mystery of marriage that makes you afraid of it?"

"Oh, no! Whatever mystery do you mean?"

Seeing that I was embarrassed, she went on, charitably:

"I've taken a course of physiology too, you know . . . and I've had some flirtations. I know all about ***that***—only too much. It's not that. What I'm afraid of is that I won't be able to find a man with whom ***everything*** won't be deadly dull: ***that***, and everything else too, the whole of marriage, the whole of life. I should be tied to him, and he'd make me be bored, too."

"But what about your 'co-eds' at college? They've learned the same things as you have. They can take just as much interest in everything."

"Oh, yes, they're like that at college. But what about afterwards? The women wear better than the men. When they're married and mothers—or divorced and remarried—sometimes they manage not to turn utterly stupid. I've met some like that, ladies in the fat forties. They've survived; or they come to life again from among the dead. But even they tell me what a fight they've had not to succumb. As for all the others, the great majority, they're just as annihilated as their husbands. And, oh, those husbands!"

"Are you talking about students when they become business men, manufacturers, army or naval officers, or civil servants? In other words, men of good birth, the pick of the United States?"

"Of course. I don't come into contact with adventurers."

"You might find them more amusing if you did. . . . So these worthy gentlemen strike you as more dead than alive?"

She nodded assent.

"They're very good at their own jobs," she said. "That's the one point in their favour."

"The inevitable result of specialisation."

"Take a manufacturer of waterproof bathroom-curtains, for example," this priceless girl went on. "He's interested in curtains; but he isn't interested in anything else—not even in bathrooms."

“Come, come! Suppose he found one of Earl Carroll’s Follies in a bathroom—or even yourself?”

“Then he’d do his best for about five minutes. After that, he’d go straight back to thinking about nothing but his curtains.”

“You’re very wise for your age,” I remarked.

“I’ve got eyes,” she replied, “and I use them. And mind you, they even go out of their way to specialise, as you call it—I’d call it to shrivel —long before they go bald. Peter Mason isn’t even a lieutenant in the Navy yet; but already he can’t appreciate anything except ships.”

“In one way,” I murmured, “that’s an advantage to the nation.”

“No, it isn’t! Does a good sailor ***have to be*** a fool otherwise? Should I criticise him for being an intelligent man as well? . . . They’re bored themselves, just because they wear blinkers. So they play the fool, drink to make themselves laugh, and make their wives drink too till they go as crazy as themselves. . . .”

Here Grace Blurb finished her cocktail.

“Of course,” she went on, “I drink myself, just the same as everybody else. You can’t get left behind. You must have pep, just like all the other young wets. My father and mother aren’t dry either. I don’t like it much. In fact, I don’t like it at all; but I don’t want them to be ashamed of me. . . . Oh, yes, I suppose I’ll end by marrying, forgetting all about things, being bored trying to amuse myself, and getting drunk just to feel that I’ve gone wild.”

She was quite in earnest. I felt very sorry for her.

“Still, I suppose you get on well with your mother?” I asked; and at once I felt that I had put my foot in it.

“My mother?” she repeated. “She’s married for the third time, you know.”

“Oh, is she?”

“She’s still quite attractive. She takes such care of herself. But what’s the good of it? Just to get more men and have more disappointments ? When she’s a bit lit up with moonshine, she unbuttons herself to me, she takes me into her confidence. And all she’s got to say is: ‘First husband, total loss; second, no better; third, put up with him, and go in for gigolos.’ ”

“And what about the gigolos?” I asked.

“Oh, they’re awful! I see them in the hotel lobbies. Pretty little mannikins. . . . They’ve no sooner crawled out of the Hudson, or come up from Michigan, than they make up a nice little story and create themselves Baltic barons or Italian counts. Then it’s good-bye to Mamma’s dollars!”

“So they, anyhow, know how to talk to women. They know . . . In short, they’d stay in the bathroom?”

“Oh, yes, they can bewitch the women all right—not that it’s very hard, when they’re so bored with their own set. And then these gigolos scrounge jewellery. Or else they get a fat cheque signed for them. Or else they bribe witnesses and bring an action for breach of promise. Or else they get the lady, her husband, her whole family into the hands of a gang. The gangster-in-chief pays them a commission. . . . Then they disappear and find somebody else.”

I was dismayed.

“My dear Miss Blurb,” said I, “are you really telling me the fate of the White woman in America, where she is sovereign more than anywhere else in the world?”

III

"Aboard!" shouted the stalwart Negroes who stood at the entrance to every Pullman car.

Immediately the Whites who had got out on the platform climbed back up the yellow-painted steps, docile as sheep summoned by the shepherd. The great greyish train set off once more on its way across America. I had stopped over from one of these trains, and was picking up another. On all of them I found the same Negro porters in their white tunics: tall, well-fed, clean, smart—an extraordinary pick of the American Negro race, as a whole so degenerate.

From East to West, from North to South, they repeated their "Aboard" at every station. In between stations, they rendered, always with the same smiling courtesy, a thousand and one little services to the White aristocracy, with whom, in short, they were in close contact all day and all night.

Meanwhile the Black rabble, the Negro plebs, very different to be sure, poverty-stricken and unpleasant-looking, were isolated in the special "Jim Crow" car at the head of the train. When I ventured in that direction, the Pullman porters themselves felt sure that this foreigner was making a mistake, and courteously chivvied me back among my own race.

I could not have been given a better notion of the line of demarcation, anomalous in my French eyes, between these fine, sleek house dogs and the poor, starveling curs. Meanwhile, in my own Pullman car, I had plenty of leisure to reflect on the personality of the "White woman," as my friend Miss Blurb's conversation exhibited her to my mind's eyes, and as I could see her around me in the flesh. Naturally there were any number of White women to be seen in the Pullman cars; and they were, relatively speaking, an ***élite,*** winnowed by the money-standard. They were women who had money to travel.

What a regiment of pretty girls there were on ail these lines, whether one travelled by the "Apache," the "Sunset," or the "New York"! . . . What fine lines they themselves had, and what fine faces! Their complexions were all pink and white, or else pale amber: healthy, open-air faces without a single blemish. They looked as though they had not a care in the world.

They lived around me, not even noticing my curiosity about them, so securely did they feel themselves protected from men under their country's Puritan regime. I could see them by day, wearing frocks in Parisian style which moulded their bodies, and by night in the travelling dormitory in pyjamas; coming and going, eating, yawning, indifferent and regal, like idols. Somewhere they had husbands working for them, who asked nothing of them except their adorable, but ***impersonal*** beauty.

Were they, in fact, thinking about anything except hairdressing? I could see no sign of it. When they had a male companion, husband or brother, she and he exchanged scarcely a word. They ruminated side by side, in the same kind of torpor. When they were travelling alone—as was often the case—they ran through magazines consisting mostly of pictures.

Nevertheless, now that I was on the alert, sometimes on their unwrinkled brows, in their smiling, empty eyes, on their lips standardised by lip-stick, I surprised a human awakening, a kind of unsettlement, a pitiful sense of dissatisfaction.

"Am I dreaming? What's happening to me? What am I doing here? Where am I going?"

These were the questions which, inside these wax dolls, creatures really alive suddenly seemed to ask themselves—really alive, and aghast.

All at once there came into my own mind surprising examples of such dissatisfaction, which I had observed, in much cruder form, in other White women who were not French either, and who seemed, even more than these American women, to enjoy almost miraculous material blessedness, something like omnipotence. . . .

I remembered an easy-going Viennese blonde, the wife of a respectably rich banker. She confessed to me that she was being blackmailed by a thoroughly second-rate adventurer. This vulgar fellow, ill-kempt and obviously ill-reputed, had been my penitent's lover—and she was so aristocratic that it would never have entered my head to think of making love to her. She had written him such mad letters that, one fine day, he thought it worth his while to sell them back to her, at a price—too high a price for this married woman, who had nothing but her dress-allowance. He threatened to address himself to her husband.

She begged me to come to the rescue and save her from scandal. I saw the blackmailer, and threatened him in turn with prosecution. I negotiated the return of the letters at a reasonable price. This melodrama happened to me in the normal course of my life in Europe. When the victim was set free, and was sobbing in her relief, I asked her:

"But how did you ever come to have a lover like that?"

"I didn't love him at all," she stammered, "***but I was so bored***. . . ."

Another case I recalled was that of a young Jewish widow, wealthy enough by birth, and still wealthier as the result of her widowhood. She was a highly cultivated, almost a learned woman, and a charitable one, an active patroness of good works. . . . But suddenly, from time to time, she appealed to me, as a friend of hers, to escort her to the most outlandish assemblies of perverts, or their dupes, amid the lowest dregs of society, which I should never have heard of but for her.

No sooner had she satisfied this whim of hers than she was sickened.

"Let's get out of this, quick—it's vile! My God, if anybody knew I was in a place like this! . . .

"But, Madam," I replied, "didn't I tell you in advance that you would be disgusted?"

"You were only too right," she would say. "***But sometimes I'm so bored***! . . ."

Finally there was a German woman, also the wife of a financier, and, in this case, a real millionairess. Her neurasthenic state was sufficiently obvious some time before she died from what was officially said to be heart attack. Her secretary and a nurse both happened to take me into their confidence, and I learnt that she had committed suicide by taking an over-dose of veronal—just like a young cinema "star."

She, too, was "so bored," when she was in a position to turn this world of ours into a fairyland—when she could buy anything in it, except . . .

"***Except what***?" I asked myself, as I sat in my Pullman car. If these privileged women seemed emotionally less happy than poor women, was this merely because they lacked what Pascal called a "***divertissement***?" Or was it not rather because they lacked that sovereign remedy for boredom, which it is impossible to buy: ***passionate love***?

It struck me that there was ***an emotional crisis among White women***, even those who suffered least from the economic crisis. Was it summed up in this axiom: "Their husbands make plenty of money, but they don't know how to make ***that***?"

Then, as my meditation had not cut my appetite, I went to lunch in the restaurant-car.

The Negro steward assigned me a place opposite an imposing old lady. As a rule, American women grow old gracefully, without putting on much flesh; but this one had a pot-belly like a Norman farmer, and was not in the least ashamed of it. She settled her gold-rimmed glasses to have a better look at me, and responded with a smile to my little bow. I soon realised that she wanted to spice her national cooking with a dash of cosmopolitan conversation.

"You're French, aren't you?" she said at length, in the apologetic, but aggressive tone of a lady-killer accosting an unknown woman. "Haven't I met you somewhere before?"

"I doubt, Madam," I replied, "whether there's any other Frenchman who speaks American as badly as I do."

She spread herself in flattery. I suspected from now on that she was one of those people who lay it on thick.

"Oh, how amusing you are!" she exclaimed. "Not at all—you speak our language very well indeed. You're a Parisian, I'm sure, aren't you, and an artist or a writer—a man of the world?"

These labels had never struck me as so comical as when I heard them lavished on me like this.

"You are, aren't you?" she persisted. "How lucky for me! I was just longing for the advice of a nice, experienced Frenchman. It's about a new league of which I'm president: a league of women. You French people know women so well!"

She was simply cooing. Her three chins undulated like a sea-serpent on the ocean of her bosom. I should have been afraid of her if it hadn't been broad daylight in a carful of people.

"I haven't been to France yet," she confided regretfully. "They say that in France the weaker sex knows ***how to be happy***. Frenchwomen know what they want, don't they?"

"Doubtless because they're intelligent and healthy."

"Do you think so? In any case, my poor fellow-countrywomen here don't know what they want. They don't really. It's not to the credit of American civilisation; but it's much better to say what's wrong than to die of it."

"One mustn't make the worst of things, either," said I prudently.

"My dear boy, American women are like American men. If you don't mark out the path for them, if you don't make them march in step, one behind the other, by groups, by regiments, with a big drum in front, they end in suicide. For, fundamentally, they're very virtuous; and then, one day, disgust overtakes them. There was another case this very week: the wife of a talented sculptor in Greenwich village. I don't know whether she or her husband was the leading spirit. In any case, they were drinking together, but not alone. It was one of those dreadful drinking parties. . . . At dawn, she found that she was stark naked, in the midst of a lot of unattractive barbarians. Well, she got out of the window—it was on the twenty-fifth floor—and threw herself down. They picked her up dead."

"So I should imagine," I murmured. "What a shock for the milkmen!"

"That's why my new organisation answers an urgent need. It's called the 'League for Women's Happiness.' It's intended to fight against this paganism, this materialism, which has come to birth here through the idolatry of business. . . . American men love their wives—in fact, they adore them. But they imagine that they've given them everything when they give them dollars—and that's just nothing. . . ."

Mrs. H. W. Tupin—for that was her name—took a note out of her bag and tossed it on the luncheon bill with infinite disdain.

“So they make a success of their business,” she went on. “But, as for getting themselves loved and making their wives happy in return —they’re all hopeless idiots! So I made up my mind to come to women’s rescue. I want to restore them to their original happiness. . . .”

“To the state of Eve before she got interested in Adam?” I murmured.

“No, sir! ***To the first state of the modern woman.”***

“Excuse me,” I said, recalling my own line of investigation; “when you say ‘modern woman,’ do you mean the White woman?”

“Of course. Coloured women are just what the ancient woman used to be; slaves prostrate before the male. On the contrary, the modern White woman is free, with her own individuality, her own personality.”

“She often hides it very well,” I groaned, as I caught sight of a pretty, but dreary-eyed girl lunching near us.

“That’s from modesty, sir, and ***lack of practice***. Have you ever thought about the ***origins*** of the modern woman—about the history of her creation? I sum it up in two words: ***Christianity*** and ***chivalry***.

“Do you?” said I, suddenly paying more attention.

“Such a wonderful two-fold romance! . . . Primitive Christianity, amid all the hardness of the ancient world. Our Lord had no sooner vanished from the earth than the apostles’ narratives made Him hover over it like a spirit of goodness. Slaves were freed, the barbarians were converted, pious hermits meditated in the desert. . . .”

“The meditation on the violin in ***Thais,***” I interjected. “ Massenet ***fecit***.”

“Yes, that charming light opera of yours—so sentimental, so French! . . . Then came chivalry; and ladies were deified. For their sakes knights errant attacked even giants . . .”

“And windmills.”

“They armed heroes for the Crusades . . .”

“Who left them girdles of chastity.”

“They lived surrounded by pages, myrmidons, astrologers and fairies. They lived in great hope, and in great dread—all the atmosphere of the Year One Thousand, with its bandits and its attacks on castles. Then, from century to century, all that romance became more refined. We came to farthingales, hoops, abbeys, stage-coaches, duels, kings’ mistresses, exile to the Indies . . .”

“We’re getting to ***Manon***,” I pointed out.

“And then the guillotine. And ruins beside the lake: the keepsake period. Girls so pure that a man would die rather than think of touching them. . . .”

“***Werther***, in short.”

“You follow the wonderful elevation of feminine personality? Woman became all sensibility, all soul: a masterpiece. . . . And now, in these heart-breaking times of ours, nothing of all this precious strength of hers can find an outlet—above all, in the United States. Your European war shook us up a bit; but so little! . . .”

“What a pity! And how about the gangsters who kidnap you?”

“President Roosevelt is getting rid of them. So our women of to-day, even the best of them, the finest of them, are defrauded of any romantic emotion. If they work just the same as men, if they go into business or politics, it’s even worse. They’re bored. They quarrel with themselves just as much as any ill-matched couple. In fact, the true destiny of woman is not to make money, nor even to spend money. . . .”

“But I suppose the members of your league will pay a subscription, won’t they?” I interrupted. “They generally do. . . . Well, dear lady, in the fable the lion, the king of beasts, had the plague. It may be that the American woman, the queen of White

women, suffers from another malady: boredom. You haven't yet told me what remedy you suggest for it. But your lesson in feminine history in itself strikes me as highly instructive. You're quite right. The modern woman has been born of all the romance which you have evoked. Hence her depression, in a somewhat mercenary age. . . . But what next? What do you prophesy for the future?"

"The wheel has come full circle," Mrs. Tupin declared. "We are back in the position of decadent Rome. We must make a fresh start; and for that we need a new miracle, such as Christianity was. . . ."

"But meanwhile whither are you tending?"

"Perhaps towards trials, even suffering! Woman doesn't want to be always spoiled, always stuck up on an altar. The motto, 'Ladies first,' doesn't express the last word in our aspirations. Sometimes we want to be beaten, even humiliated. . . ."

"So Molière and several others in France have thought, Madam."

She leant forward confidentially; and it was like an avalanche across the table which providentially separated us.

"What does a woman dream about?" she murmured fervently. "That somebody may belong to her, body and soul—only to her, and for ever. She loves to feel that she is an inspiration, and also a servant—a familiar spirit that can take innumerable shapes beneath the enchanter's wand. She loves her lover to be both strong and weak, but in either case not her equal: unlike the 'co-eds' of our mixed colleges, who never let us forget that we were educated with them. Finally, the modern woman of the type who will join my league loves, above all, to feel that she is both a consoler and a righter of wrongs. If the man she chooses is an outlaw, a man persecuted and despised, so much the better. Let him be a worm in love with a star: she will lavish upon him ineffable compensation for the insults he suffers. . . . But he must also know how to serenade her in a voice that will make her weep!"

Mrs. Tupin paused to take breath, just as the engine of our train might do.

"Have you yourself actually effected any cures?" I asked.

"I'm attempting a certain number," she said, quite seriously. "But it's very difficult. Sometimes one has to use shock treatment, just as in the case of major septicaemia. Sexual boredom is really the worst of all forms of boredom, isn't it?"

I made suitable acknowledgment of this definite aphorism from the lips of Mrs. Tupin, that Dr. Knock of love. She went on with her wisdom.

"I had some good news by the last Far Eastern mail. One of my most desperate cases, who was heading straight for suicide like that woman in Greenwich village, has acquired a fresh taste for life, thanks to my advice. She went to India, and she's become an enthusiast for Gandhi. She writes to me that she's madly happy."

"So," I murmured, after a moment of surprised silence, "you're not afraid of crossing the 'Colour line'?"

Mrs. Tupin had stopped looking at me. She was beckoning to the plumpest and sleekest of all the Pullman Negroes: a sleeping-car attendant, who was passing through the restaurant car. His fine, frizzy, solemn head was adorned with horn-rimmed glasses.

He came over to her, smug and suave. She told him to bring her a bottle of peppermint at three o'clock to her ***coupé***, No. 24.

To take a ***coupé*** on an American train signifies an unusual taste for solitude, shared or unshared. I noticed that Mrs. Tupin's tone, as she spoke to the Negro, was maternal, if not affectionate.

"Excuse me," she said to me at length. "What were you saying? Oh yes, the Colour prejudice. No, we don't dismiss it altogether. But medical science, you know,

sometimes has to employ poisons in order to effect a cure. As I've told you, we must ***re-create romance.*** We must give the Twentieth Century woman back her emotions of the early Christians. We need the circus-arena, and slaves newly freed. . . . ***Thais, Manon, Werther***—you're quite right. What does it matter if Werther is sometimes a bit dark-skinned, so long as he is prepared to offer himself as a sacrifice to us? . . ."

She stood up, imposing as a mountain. A profound enigma of the feminine heart in America had perhaps just been revealed to me. But I immediately reflected that in France, too, we possess certain caricatures of Corinne or Madame Bovary no less ridiculous than a Mrs. Tupin; but these half-crazy women are far from having any title to represent the French woman in general.

So I did not believe for a moment that Mrs. Tupin, a rather sad case of Freudian repression, represented, as she was bold enough to claim, the average American woman of to-day. All her hectic remarks amounted simply to a symptom of a pathological condition. But that condition was threatening for the future; and it should never have been allowed to arise.

CHAPTER IV

FLOSSIE OF NEW ORLEANS

"YOU mustn't go there at night. You don't know them!" my friends told me, much upset at the idea.

It was the night of my arrival in the capital of the American South: New Orleans. Ever since the morning, French friends and delightful Louisianians had been making me share their enthusiasm for that fine, majestic city, in which memorials of French colonial days have been so well preserved amid the giant buildings of modern America.

Now, after midnight, they had escorted me back to my hotel, and it was obvious that they wanted to go to bed. They had more than earned the right to rest. But for my part, enthusiastic traveller that I am, I was not yet tired enough.

Gratefully bidding them go to bed, I confided to them my idea of setting off by myself on an exploration which, from the outset, they had rather discouraged: that of the Negro quarters.

"Oh no, you really mustn't go there so late as this!" insisted one of them, who was almost as much French as American. "You might get into trouble."

"But, my dear people, I've been through Shanghai at night, during the Chino-Japanese struggle; through Mukden at night, at the height of the season for bandits; and through Cairo and Beyruth at night, at a time when Europeans were hardly popular there. . . ."

"But this isn't the same thing at all. You might have a row with drunkards, or be knocked down by a robber. . . . Even if nothing happened to you, your impressions would be painfully depressing—and we shouldn't be there to explain things to you. Wait till tomorrow, and then we'll go together in daylight. Besides, everybody's asleep by now. . . . They're not a very pretty sight, those poor Blacks of ours. . . ."

I could feel that they were really in earnest, and it would have been ungrateful on my part not to listen to them. So I promised that I wouldn't visit the 'Black Belt' without them, and they went to bed quite happy.

The next day I got my first sight of streets with the names of Muses—Euterpe street, Clio street—consisting of dilapidated, dirty wooden houses. In front of them lounged Negroes with brutish faces: some of them covered with suppurating sores, or twisted by infirmity. I realised why my friends were in no hurry to show them to me, after the splendid panorama from the Hibernia Buildings or the villas in Saint Charles avenue.

"What can you expect?" explained the White who had been good enough to act as my guide. "They do next to no work, and when they fall sick they won't take care of themselves. We do all we can to appeal to their better nature. We try to educate them. But inevitably the crisis is decimating them. . . ."

"I don't notice any half-breeds among these poor wretches," I remarked. "All the men are as pitch-black as caricatures of Africans, and all the women are pretty black. . . . What's become of your "octoroons," your eighty per cent Whites, and your honey-coloured ladies who are so famous for their waddle and their ***morbidezza***?"

"Of course, no Coloured man ever has a child by a White woman. And nowadays no White man ever takes any woman in the least tainted as a wife, ***or even as a mistress***. . . .

"Yes, that's your law, isn't it? So, since you can't exterminate this race, you drive it back on itself. You isolate it. You concentrate its members in a suburb or two, with

their own cinemas and their own public fountains, from which you'd never drink. You make them get blacker than ever, so long as they go on breeding."

"Well, at least they're not slaves any more, are they? . . . If you had a daughter, would you give her to one of them?"

"Of course I shouldn't! And I quite understand that you've got to defend yourselves against them now. But all this had a ***beginning*** —and it was anything but a fair start. There weren't always Negroes in America."

"That's true," he admitted, "that's true enough."

The night before, it was not long after midnight when my friends escorted me back to my hotel. I entered its sleepy lounge; but the lift didn't tempt me.

As a matter of precaution, I spied through the revolving doors to make sure my friends had gone. Then I went out again, delighted to breathe the cool night air. Within a few yards I was in the main business district. All the shops were shut; but that just suited me. What I could breathe in this silence was the intimate atmosphere of the city, just as you can breathe it in Paris in the neighbourhood of the Bourse and the rue du Sentier, when all the shutters are up.

This district had the same responsible, but sleepy air about it—plus some dark, dreaming skyscrapers. Its spacious roadway, brilliantly black, disturbed only by two or three lorries, could forget the millions of wheels which would set it shuddering again within the next few hours.

I am very fond of seeing urban landscapes in all their nudity like this. I have wandered about in them, all by myself, many a night all over the world. My walks by day, even with the most intelligent of guides, never initiated me into the secret of cities so well as these nocturnal prowls of mine.

Suddenly I heard the strident strains of a jazz band. It was playing on a first floor: the sole sign of life in a great office-building. It was as mild as a spring night in Nice, and the windows were open. An electric sign announced: "Dancing School." I climbed straight up the steep stairs.

The conventional dancing school sign masked a haunt of semi-prostitutes. It appeared to have been improvised in this office-building by some bankrupt business man. Since prostitution is officially "abolished" in the United States, it flourishes there under various disguises, with a rankness of growth, born of its prohibition, which is perhaps unknown in our less strict France.

A notice on the landing-door announced: "Lessons given by fifty ladies"; but there were scarcely a score of these ladies in the oblong room, still showing traces of the partitions and counters which had been removed. Inside the entrance-lobby the proprietor, a stout, sturdy American, chewing a cigar, showed me to the cash-desk, protected by a grating, where his wife—let us suppose—sold tickets at five cents "a lesson," with a blank space for the name of the "instructress." He invited me to hang my hat and even my jacket on the railings, as other "pupils" had done before me.

Pupils were not bound to dance. All they had to do, whenever the Negro musicians struck up a tango or a one-step, was to hand over a ticket to the sub-manager, a Louisianian of horsey type, oozing alcohol, who kept on walking round and round the dance floor.

Some of the visitors were thus contenting themselves with looking on, or had made straight for the bar. I, too, was a spectator for a few moments. All the ladies were White, and all their clients were White too. If I had been Coloured and had the audacity to go up there, they would certainly have thrown me out.

Business was none too brisk. There were not enough visitors—young clerks and sailors—to go round the girls. Even though there were only a score of girls, several of

them were wall-flowers. From where they sat, they smiled at me and tried to pick me up.

They looked like factory girls out of work, and the oldest of them might be thirty. They wore low-cut dresses, shabby but elegant enough. All of them bore the stamp of the lower-class American woman: in other words, they were hard-boiled. They were pretty enough, too, at first sight. Closer up, under their make-up their faces already betrayed the ravages of hard living and poor feeding.

"Well, are you going to dance?" a blonde repeated for the third time.

Her eyes looked so fatalistic, and her voice was so resigned that I suddenly preferred her to any of the others. We started dancing together amid the mournfully gyrating couples. In her capacity as "instructress," she at least taught me to hold my ticket between my fingers as I danced. When we met the horsey man, he tore half of it off, and the girl tucked the other half into her belt.

"If you buy a book of tickets," she explained, "you get a discount; and then you can give some of them to me. You're not supposed to let anybody see you do it, though everybody knows all about it, of course. Because you're going to dance with me now until closing-time, aren't you? Don't be unfaithful to me! Then I'll take you home with me, if you like. My name's Flossie. You look like a stranger. You don't belong to New Orleans, do you?"

By way of simplifying rather than lying, I told her I was a Frenchman interested in the cotton business, and that I had come to Louisiana to see salesmen.

"Cotton seems to be doing badly. But then so is everything else," she opined listlessly.

I took advantage of this pessimistic remark of hers to tell her politely that, when the dancing was over, I should not claim the favour she offered me.

"Another bad customer!" she said; but she did not press me. "In any case, you'll keep me company till then, won't you? It's after one, and they shut at two. If you'd rather sit down, we can, so long as you keep on giving tickets."

In Flossie I rediscovered the mechanical solicitation, the superlative indifference of prostitutes all the world over. But I was myself affected by the atmosphere of this place. The din of the Negro orchestra intoxicated me. I should have liked to pick up some of the blonde's comrades and get them to talk. But by this time they were also monopolised by partners, and I knew long before I ever set foot in the place that prostitutes everywhere do their best to convey the illusion of exclusive love. Flossie agreed to forgo my acquaintance within an hour. But, while I was there, she regarded me as her own property.

"I might have dropped you, since you're not going to finish off the night for me," she remarked. "For, by the terms of our engagement here, we mustn't leave the place so long as it's open. So our only chance of taking a man home is afterwards. But I don't mind telling you that I'm very tired to-night. I get my percentage on the tickets you've bought for me, and that will do. I think I'll go and sleep at my lover's."

"Have you got a 'sweet man'—a protector?"

"You mean a man whom I work for, while he beats me or deceives me? No, thanks—not for me! I don't believe in that kind of love."

"Then what kind of love do you believe in?"

"I want just to be loved. I want pure love—a love of the heart; the love of a man who's true to me, but never touches me. That's what I want, if you'd really like to know."

"She, too!" I reflected. If I had complimented her on remaining a true woman in spite of selling herself for a living, I should have hurt her. But she could easily see

from my face that what she said touched me, and that I did not doubt that she was sincere and high-minded. She felt friendly towards me, and held me closer to her supple body as we danced.

"You're not like some men," she went on. "You can understand us. It's easy to see that you're French. Are you staying long in New Orleans?"

"No. I'm going north quite soon."

"Oh, are you? . . . You're French, so I suppose you haven't got any prejudice against Coloured people."

"I take them as I find them, just like anybody else."

"I'm glad to hear that."

We went and sat down for a little. Poor Flossie had her legs "electrocuted," as she put it, from so much fox-trotting. She fell silent, and nearly went to sleep. I thought over what she had said to me. "I want pure love"—in this place! Humanity wasn't as bad as it sometimes looks. But why had she mentioned Coloured people to me?

The musicians disappeared from their dais, and the stout proprietor presided in person over his guests as they hastily collected their coats and hats and dispersed. The girls, after picking up their coats, came downstairs by themselves. But outside almost all of them found a man waiting for them: either a "pupil" or their "sweet man," eager to know how much they had earned. The same thing happens in every country. I saw no sign of the police.

Flossie had disappeared into the cloak-room with the other girls. I left the dance-hall, and was tempted to return to my hotel without more ado. Still, I hadn't said good-bye to her. Routine politeness, and also my professional instinct of curiosity, made me wait for her.

She came downstairs, carrying a little suitcase, from which I inferred that she had no fixed domicile. There was nobody else waiting for her.

"Oh, it's nice of you to have waited," she cried, as she caught sight of me. She took me by the arm, looking so pleased that I realised how gratified she was not to go away alone, while her belated comrades were all joined by men.

"But you know," I protested, " I only wanted to say good-night to you."

"Yes, I know: you told me. That's all right," she replied, almost affectionately. "But you can walk along with me for five minutes, can't you? You're not in such a hurry as all that."

Clearly this wasn't the conventional invitation of the prostitute any more. Good faith seemed established on both sides. I took her bag, and we set off along Canal Street, towards the river.

This wide street, specially constructed for traffic, was now even more solemnly deserted than before. The night was approaching that point, just before dawn, when cities sleep so profoundly that they might be dead.

We went past garages and warehouses. The street widened into a great semicircle. In the distance in front of us I could make out big black masses: a suspension-bridge, trains of trucks, monster cranes, giant barges. I had only been here before by daylight, and then hurriedly, in a car.

Everything was dark and sinister, with a few patches of gleaming, lapping water. From this Mississippi, god-like in its strength, rose a viscous mist, like a furtive, pungent breath.

"Where are you taking me?" I asked Flossie, who was guiding me silently.

She burst out laughing.

“To see my lover, of course! I like to show him that I’ve got men friends. But I can’t take Americans there: it would get me into trouble. You’re French, and you don’t live in New Orleans, so it’s all right.”

“What do you mean?”

“You’ll see in a moment. We’re almost there.”

She led me towards some suspicious-looking houses at a corner.

Flossie stopped. She looked around us, and especially along the imposing vista of Canal Street, which separated me from my hotel and my White brethren.

“It’s all right, there’s nobody looking,” she murmured. “You can buy me some oranges, my dear. . . .”

I jumped at this odd remark, but Flossie laughed again. Then I caught sight of a tiny greengrocer’s shop, a mere shed, still open, and lit by a single naked electric bulb hanging at the end of its flex.

In between two baskets full of oranges and shaddocks, rolled up in a ball like a big dog, lay a young Negro, asleep. He was less haggard, less ugly than most of his race in this American South.

“Hello, Jake!” said Flossie.

The Negro wakened up and looked at her. The whites of his big eyes, his thick violet lips, shaped like the mouth of a jug, expressed an infinite, divine joy. This was her lover. I needed no further proof.

Flossie had picked up a grape-fruit as we entered. She went on into the back-shop, signing to me to follow her. I felt completely reassured. The back-shop, also a wooden shed, was stuffed with sacks, boxes and barrels which gave off a delicious scent of rum, cinnamon and tropical spices and fruits: all the perfumes of the West Indies, where I later travelled.

Jake had hastily brought in his stalls and put up his shutters. He joined us. We looked at one another, he and I. His face turned ashen and savage. Flossie shook her finger at him.

“Now, you old Black monster, if you get jealous I won’t come back any more!”

Jake’s woolly head turned away. His shiny, leathery cheeks were trembling. He whined through his teeth, like a dog told not to bite.

“In any case, I nearly didn’t come,” added Flossie, by way of a supplementary warning. “I believe I’m being watched. You’ll get me into trouble, I’ll bet.”

Without saying a word, the Negro knelt down and heated a brazier, on which he proceeded to roast some corncobs.

Flossie dug her elbow into my ribs, proudly.

“Do you see?” she whispered. “And there’s nothing like ***that*** between us—not a thing. But, if I told him, he’d jump on you on the spot.”

“I believe you,” said I.

“He used to be a musician at the dance-hall, you know. They dismissed him for playing too badly when ***I*** was once dancing ***too well*** with a man. He’s working here as manager for an old Negro, bursting with money. But he’s looking out for another place in a jazz-band. Jake was born to be a musician. Play us something, Daddy!”

“All right, lady,” muttered the Black.

He finished roasting the corncobs, and fetched a bottle of corn liquor in an ice-pail. Flossie carried her suitcase into a little lavatory, where she took off her fine dance-dress and put on a suit of cotton pyjamas. Then she came back, pulling and stretching her worn silk dress. She ate and drank, yawned, and went and lay down in a Creole hammock at the back of the shop. I got up from the barrel on which I was sitting.

“Don’t go yet,” she said. “Jake will play all night for you, if I like.”

By this time the poor devil was beginning to smile, as it dawned on him that I wouldn’t touch, any more than himself, this girl whom he adored so platonically, just as a real dog may adore a human being.

Bear in mind that in New Orleans, the capital of the South, she was putting the Negro in mortal peril, this White woman who condescended to come and sleep under the same roof. She, for her part, was running the risk at least of tarring and feathering at the hands of some organisation like the Ku-Klux-Klan—as well as being expelled from the city, if not imprisoned under the severe Mann Act.

Jake tuned a banjo. Then he started playing and singing in a minor key those soft old airs of his slave race, the Mississippi “blues,” which came to birth in the cabins when the Negroes were still sighing for Africa.

He played ***Want nothing but loving***, ***We two will go home*** and several others. Flossie had put out the electric lamp, which hurt her eyes. By the light of the brazier, I could just make out the black hands of the musician as he struck chords. But the flesh of the White woman in the hammock and her golden hair remained luminous.

Little by little, Flossie fell asleep. I could tell it from Jake’s singing, which had turned into a regular lullaby. I tiptoed out of the shed, and gave my host a few quarters as he opened the door for me.

The paling sky heralded dawn. I withdrew from that scene of chaste affection to return to the world of hatred. Uncle Tom’s descendant took one last perplexed look at me, like a sheep-dog not quite sure whether he shouldn’t have bitten. In front of me, Uncle Sam’s New Orleans announced its awakening with a din of syrens and motor-engines. This American landscape lost its fleeting quality of dream.

CHAPTER V

THE FLOOD THAT FRIGHTENS AMERICA

THE next man with whom I discussed the Colour question was a canteen-keeper on the Illinois Central Railroad, in a train which was taking me from New Orleans to Chicago. In democratic America, the restaurant-car is supplemented by a travelling canteen for poorer passengers. Tired of the higher fauna of the Pullmans, I had gone among them, and I found much more entertainment amid this swarm of Americanised Italians, Czechs and Poles.

"A minestrone," I said to the canteen-keeper, a thin, bony White in brown trousers and shirt, with his sleeves rolled up, sharp-eyed under his peaked cap. He had a Negro assistant.

With almost one and the same movement, he put my half-dollar in the till, gave me back my change, took a tin out of a pigeon-hole, and plunged it into a shining heater which steamed behind him. I waited, while he served ices and spaghetti to other customers.

He took my tin out of his oven again, and opened it over a pasteboard plate. Alas, the steaming liquid which emerged was black as pitch. The tin had gone bad. Quite undisturbed, the canteen-keeper swept the plate into a swill-tub, and heated another tin for me. Meanwhile he cursed the Negro.

"It's his fault," he told me. "He's supposed to see that things are all right before they're served. But, as you can see, he doesn't do it. Here, have a peppermint to keep you patient."

I was in no hurry: I was feeling less hungry now! Then, recognising me for a foreigner, the worthy American went on, in a rather unexpected idiom:

"***Je souis apprenant francais langage***. ***Vraiment heureux si possible parler vous avec***!"

Despite my efforts, he carried on the conversation in this style, while I was assimilating minestrone No. 2. It was spicy, but not poisonous.

"This Coloured brood will be the death of us," the canteen-keeper continued. "Lazy, negligent good-for-nothings—that's what they are. They're just like black rust getting into the wheels of this big American machine of ours, and before we know where we are they'll put it out of action."

"So bad as all that, eh?"

He stretched out his bare, red-haired forearm, and pointed at the landscape gliding past the window, a wooden, flooded plain. Tree-trunks stood out of stagnant water. It lapped at the thresholds of little houses, and turned them into so many islets.

"The Mississippi's in flood, see? Well, I'm not fifty yet, and since I was a boy I've seen the flood of Negroes rising from the South towards the North and the East—a regular tidal wave of them! They travel on these trains, and I feed them. At New Orleans, and as far as Memphis, they stay in their own coaches and don't dare to get out of them. Then, the farther they go the bolder they get. By the time they've got to Chicago they're not afraid of anything. They're as good as the next man . . . And then they stagnate, just like the water in that marsh. . . ."

"Has all this happened recently?"

"Since ***your*** war."

He left me to serve some other customers, and then came back.

"Before 1917," he resumed, "the Negro limit this way was Memphis, Tennessee. Are you getting out at Memphis?"

"Yes, but I'm not staying there long, unfortunately."

"That's a pity. There you'd understand how we're fixed with the Blacks. It's a thing quite peculiar to ourselves. You haven't got anything like it in Europe."

"So I'm often told."

"The Mississippi is the natural route from South to North, and Memphis marks the frontier, so to speak, between the two climates, with the Southerners on one side and the Northerners and Easterners on the other. It's a kind of joint, a kind of filter—or a kind of tap! . . ."

"We've got much the same thing in France, at Lyons: a fine town."

"Well, Blacks from all over the South who had made a few dollars used to go and lose them again in Memphis; for there they found themselves ***almost*** in the North, you see, among Whites who treated them less strictly—and were quite prepared to pluck them. Then, once they were beggars again, they could make a fresh start in the factories, in the hope of soon being able to return to the gambling-houses and dance-halls in Beale Street, their Paradise. The Jewish merchants who had bought their fine clothes would hire them out to them again for the night. Then they would have a fine time in their 'honky-tonks,' with their more or less Black best girls."

"And now?"

"Now it's still on with the dance, as you'll see for yourself. You'll hear enough banjos and electric organs, played entirely for Negroes, in the North Front and all round there. You may witness a man-hunt, as a sequel to drink, cheating and murder, or even a regular battle among mulatto girls to get some bully all to themselves. But what's new, what's ***post-war***, is that to this fine brew are added Blacks from Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Saint Louis, all over the North. They get homesick for the South whence they came, and sometimes, to soak themselves in it again, they go back as far as Memphis: so far, but no farther."

"What an interesting mixture!"

"What a ghastly mixture, you mean. These Negroes have got used to the laxer ways of the North, and they've no respect for anything any more. They walk in anywhere as though they owned the place. If a pretty White woman takes their fancy, they're not afraid to stare at her and laugh in a nasty way that makes her blush."

"So it's got to that?" I murmured. But I added:

"There's a proverb: 'A cat may look at a king.' "

"Eh?" said the canteen-keeper, taken aback. "But the cat isn't likely to rape the king, is it? . . . These impudent Blacks of ours wouldn't get away with it if we made a bonfire of one of them now and again, just to cure them of a taste for White flesh. Hi, Mike, you slacker! You're letting us run out of coffee. And open another case of lemonade for me."

Having thus got rid of some of his bile and stimulated Mike, an impassive listener to this diatribe, which was happily made in pseudo-French, he leant across the counter.

"The mistake they've made in the North," he confided to me, "is to let their Negroes go into business and get rich enough to marry White women, perfectly White women, blondes and all that, and show them off in luxury cars driven by White chauffeurs."

The way in which he said this touched me. This pure "Caucasian White" American, growing middle-aged in a hard life, plying a poor trade on that railway, had doubtless never possessed either a fine car, a home of his own, or, least of all, a wife of his own, " blonde and all that."

That was one excuse for his Negrophobia. For that matter, it did not seem to make him a hard task-master for Mike. Moreover, his bent of mind, direct and simple, rang true. It betrayed the sincerity—fundamentally Puritan—of so many middle-class Americans.

"Look here," I said to him, "I'd like you to tell me more about this mess of yours with the Negroes. In France we don't even pay any attention to them. They live among us, just like ourselves; and there isn't any trouble."

"Well, in any case, you've never had a Black invasion such as we have."

"Just a minute . . . I've never heard that your Black 'invaders' came here of their own accord."

He stood up and looked me straight in the face, suddenly grave as a Calvinist in heroic times.

"You mean the beginning of it all? The African slave-trade—slavery itself? Oh yes, that was a sin on the part of our ancestors —and a mortal sin, too. 'Our Federal Constitution binds us all in a covenant with Death, inasmuch as it legalises the slave status.' So William Lloyd Garrison said in 1831. He went on to declare that it would be better for the North to break up the unity of the American nation, rather than remain an accomplice of the sinners of the South in this law which was an abomination in God's eyes. My family has long been settled in Dakota—right out in the North-West. Out that way, everybody used to look upon the Southern slave-owners as damned comrades of the Devil."

"Just how long ago was it since it all began?" I asked.

"You mean the arrival of the first shiploads of 'black ivory'? It was about 1610, in Virginia, when workers were wanted for the first tobacco plantations, and they couldn't find enough convicts and vagabonds in England to send over here. But the Negroes they picked up were much worse. . . . It started on quite a small scale, with just a few hundred Blacks from Guinea. Well, by 1850, at the time of the War of Secession, there were three and a half millions of them. And now there are fourteen millions!"

"You seem to know all about it," said I, surprised at his erudition.

"Well, I've been to school. It's all in the school-books. Besides, I'm fond of reading history. I'm a self-educated man, I am."

Expeditiously, he served two club sandwiches, a bag of sweets, and a packet of chewing-gum.

"But," he went on, with the dogged persistency of a man riding his hobby-horse, "the North-East of the States was always dead against slavery. When the Federation first came into being, in 1787, with all the area from Minnesota to the Ohio as its property—that may not mean much to you, but it was an enormous territory—Congress ordained that within this area no human being should be a slave. This vote, indeed, which was carried by a Northern majority, was one of the causes of the growing estrangement of the pro-slave South. So it went on, until the sale of Louisiana to us by your Emperor Napoleon in 1803 transformed the whole Black question, and our whole future along with it."

"Louisiana—how was that?" I asked innocently.

The canteen-keeper looked me up and down, as though he didn't think much of me.

"You're French, ain't you? Don't you know what Louisiana meant in 1803?"

"Well . . . wasn't it New Orleans and the lower Mississippi, just as it is now?"

He laughed, delighted at the chance to show off his knowledge.

“It was a territory nearly as big as all the United States at that time! It included the whole of the right bank of the Mississippi from its mouth to its source: nearly four thousand four hundred miles. It extended still farther north, as far as the Lake of the Woods in Canada. It bordered the Canadian frontier as far west as the Rockies. In the south-west it included Colorado. . . .”

“And you mean to say that Napoleon sold you all that?”

“Sure, he did! And pretty cheap, too: for fifteen million dollars—less than three cents the acre. Jefferson closed with him quick enough. Your emperor was glad to get the money to pay for his war with England. Besides, it saved him keeping soldiers in America. But he wasn’t blind: he knew very well what he was giving us. When Napoleon signed the sale, he said to the American ambassador: ‘I am establishing the power of the United States for ever, and I am creating rivals for the English who will bring their pride to the dust.’ A fine piece of business for us!”

“And yet you ask us to pay war debts!” I growled. He didn’t take any notice of that.

“The only trouble was that the United States all but fell to pieces, just on account of that purchase—and the Negroes. Those immense new regions were soon peopled by our citizens. But the colonists who came from the South wanted to keep their Black slaves, and this scandalised their neighbours who came from the North and East. There happened to be more of the latter. So, as soon as the old Louisiana was constituted into new States—Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska—the majority in them prohibited slavery. Then, in the Congress of the whole Republic, the Southern slave States found themselves in a permanent minority. Their leaders were furious, and in 1861 civil war broke out.”

“And it ended with the victory of the North: in other words, official freeing of the slaves?”

“Quite so. That was in 1865. After that, the whole problem was what was to become of these Blacks who used to be slaves.”

“They seemed to have increased and multiplied, anyhow. From three millions to fourteen millions in less than a century—that’s a lot!”

“Yes, but the main point was that they started moving about. When they found themselves free, any number of them, who had never been outside their own plantations, wanted to see a bit of the world. So they became tramps. When they ran short of money on their travels, of course they stole; and some of them murdered, too. There was a serious danger of banditry and anarchy.”

“Poor Blacks who ‘wanted to see a bit of the world’! I’m fond of travelling myself, so I can understand that.”

“Then they were offered inducements to get them to settle down. They were encouraged to take up trades; and they weren’t always the most respectable of trades, for the Negro hasn’t got our ideas about other people’s property.”

“Not being a capitalist, I suppose?”

“Some of them proved a success as farmers. But many of them made a living by all kinds of shady practices.”

“Just like any number of Whites, in short!”

“They were given votes, and that meant a chance for the carpetbagger.”

“What on earth was he?”

“He was a fellow who turned up in the country with all his worldly wealth in a bag made out of carpet—nowadays it would be fibre—and with every intention of making his fortune on the spot. The carpetbaggers were professional demagogues.

They incited the simple-minded Blacks to get public administration into their hands, so that they could themselves find plenty of pickings."

"Not a bad idea!"

"Corruption got to such a point that the Whites of the South were barred from public office, denied justice and overwhelmed with taxes and fines. They were reduced to wondering whether they would have to give up their fine country to their former slaves."

"The sins of the fathers visited on the children with a vengeance."

"But the Whites wouldn't stand for it! . . . Mike, I'm busy. Attend to those customers. Get on with it, you good-for-nothing! . . . No, sir! That was the origin of the Ku-Klux-Klan, the great secret society to redress wrongs. Its members wore white masks, swooped down by night on the carpet-baggers and their dupes, the Negroes whom they had led astray, and whipped them and sometimes hanged them."

"So that was the start of the Ku-Klux-Klan, eh? And I suppose the carpet-baggers didn't last long?"

"That was the end of them. The Blacks resigned themselves to the loss of using their right to vote in order to enrich themselves. Practically speaking, they caused no more trouble until after the European Great War."

"And what happened after 1918?"

"Two millions of us Whites went to fight on your side of the water—and they didn't all come back, either. They had to be replaced everywhere: North, East and West. So the Blacks were called in to take their places. Since then the Negroes have formed 'Black Belts' around Chicago and elsewhere. . . . You'll see for yourself; and you'll understand that we've got serious grounds for worrying—very serious grounds. . . ."

Neither of us said anything for a moment or two. I looked out of the window at a charming little town at which the train had stopped: Magnolia. Its sylvan setting matched its flowery name. There was sunlight through trees, there were cool cascades. All the play of colour, all the scintillation that is evoked by the word "Louisiana" were summed up for me in that luminous vision.

But the canteen-keeper passed through Magnolia every day, and at this moment the only thing that existed for him was sociology.

"The most serious thing of all," he went on, "has to do with women. All the stories you read in the papers about rape by Black men may not be true. But the Black wants to take his revenge on White women. It's age-old sexual curiosity, and there's no denying it. Where's it got to nowadays, and what do some White women think about it?—I don't mean women of the better class, of course. . . . That's the ticklish point."

The Puritan ring in his voice made me stare at him again.

"The sins of the fathers!" I murmured. "Those whom you reduced to slavery are now attacking your dearest treasure: the women of your race."

He nodded.

"A covenant with Death!" he repeated. "It's written in the Book: it's in Isaiah."

"Yes, but there's another text: 'Forgiveness for all sins,' " I replied. "That's written in the Book, too. And I'm sure—I may be an irresponsible Frenchman, but I'm an optimist—that this second text is going to be the true one so far as this great America of yours is concerned. She's so great, she's so strong, that sooner or later she can't fail to reconcile ***all her sons, White or Black***."

He shook his head doubtfully.

“My friend,” I went on, “your lesson in American history has proved one thing to me over again. It is that France, my own country, is a great country too. For she has a share in every event of importance that happens in the world. Well, who knows whether our French attitude of cautious broad-mindedness towards the modern mixture of race may not, under pressure of necessity, some day inspire your attitude, with appropriate differences? Meanwhile, I understand you better now; and I’m sorry for both of you, Whites and Negroes, in the position in which you find yourselves. For it’s the old story of the two men condemned to death and thrown into the water in the same sack. You’ve got to act together, or else you’ll both drown together.”

CHAPTER VI

UNDERWORLD CHICAGO

I

"FORGIVENESS for all sins—yes, of course there is," repeated my friend Albert.

My friend Albert is a clergyman, though there is nothing to show it, either in his dark lay clothes or in his smiling, not in the least clerical face. His high intellectual and moral qualities, which he masks so modestly, have made him a professor in one of the great semi-religious foundations of the University of Chicago. In America the various Churches and the State have never quarrelled, as they have in France; and the result is a common sense of religion, reinforced by the sentiment of patriotism.

We were having dinner together, after Albert, a good American as well as a good clergyman, had spent the day showing me round his city, which is perhaps the most representative in the United States. He explained everything to me, and I felt that there was no side of life with which this ecclesiastic could not sympathise, at least intellectually.

At nightfall, proud patriot and sound showman, he drove me on to that jut of land at the end of Michigan Avenue whence you can see the whole frontage of the skyscrapers, just as though you were out on the lake in a boat.

All at once, fifty floors of buildings burst into light. Their towers sprang out of the dusk, diademed with their many-coloured lanterns. Still higher, the airplane lighthouses flung their immense beams into the sky. I had already seen these giant buildings by daylight, and, far from sharing the foolish prejudice of some Europeans against them, I had found them fine, dignified, even impressive. But now I was moved to say:

"I have made my bow to Africa before the Colossi at Karnak. I have saluted Asia before the pylons of Angkor. To-day I have another bow to make. I must admit that America has done no less for architecture than the older continents. I was prepared to be disappointed by the Acropolis and the Mei-shan at Pekin, but I wasn't. I never expected to see a sight like this here; but I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

Albert was delighted at my enthusiasm. He responded to it with charming slyness.

"We built those skyscrapers to house our banks and our businesses, of course. But we hoped that they might serve to glorify God, too. I'm glad if you think we've succeeded. Then perhaps you won't write that we've nothing in Chicago but our wretched Black Belt."

"You may be sure I should never write such a calumny, Albert," I replied.

The Black Belt—the circle of Negro suburbs. . . . My guide, reticent despite his honesty, would never have taken me there on his own initiative. Similarly he left me to discover for myself Chinatown, the Ghetto, and the dirty district of streets upon streets in the Madison-Halstead neighbourhood, within a hundred yards of the wonderful Loop, inhabited by a sorry swarm of workless Whites.

Albert, rightly, no doubt, regarded these as more or less accidental blemishes upon an immense process of achievement in a state of flux. But the "Black blemish" in particular interested me. I preferred to pay my first visit to it with somebody who could sum it up for me. At my request, Albert turned his car away from the centre of the city towards South Side. It was on an early spring evening, under a pale blue sky which reminded me of Paris.

No Tower of Babel any longer blocked the view in front of us. The skyscrapers were replaced by ordinary blocks of flats, six stories high, or even less. They were unsightly and in poor repair: blackened fronts, cracked plaster, panes broken and stuffed with paper, washing hanging out of the windows. Next came little dwelling-houses, in Gothic or Rococo style, whose state of dilapidation was pitiable. They reminded you of a refugee camp after some disaster.

"The Black Belt, I suppose?" I remarked, struck by this sharp contrast with the lakeside. "Yes, all Blacks here."

The streets were just as crowded as those we had left, if not more. But, save for ourselves, they contained not one person with a White skin.

Every motorist we met—in cars as good as our own, for that matter—was a Negro. The shrieking colour-schemes of some of the pedestrians, wearing rosewood coloured suits with vermilion ties, were at least harmonised by their faces, which were uniformly chocolate. Pot-bellied Negro women lolled in deck-chairs at bow-windows. Little Negro girls played around the doorsteps in mud the same colour as themselves. Chicago had become negroid.

Let me add at once that these Black plebs did not look at all miserable—unlike the workless Whites whom I have just mentioned. They were on the whole poorly, and sometimes raggedly, dressed. But the caress of the Northern sun, however little warmth there might be in it, still put life into these bodies meant to live in bamboo huts. Their sooty or ochre lips, their yellow eyes, laughed aimlessly; for it is the nature of Negroes to laugh, even when they are in trouble.

I found them, besides, less ugly than in the South, less warped out of human shape, less monstrous. Here, to be sure, they were not like splendid animals, as they are in Africa; but neither were they like brutes dressed up as men. They looked, alas, like citizens of the United States. This was thanks to the money they had been free to earn between 1918 and the depression.

At the moment, so Albert told me, they were in course of handing back to hard-working Whites the last vestiges of the small fortunes which—by sheer luck—had come their way during that period when they found life so extraordinarily easy for them. They had been out of work ever since 1931—and so had any number of Whites, for that matter. But they had been the first to lose their jobs, because they had been dismissed in preference to Whites, and also because ***Negroes don't like work***.

They dodge work as much as they can. This is not from sheer laziness: they will work themselves to death dancing or playing their jazz. The point is that the only thing they like is amusing themselves. Perhaps they are right! In any case, that happens to be their particular bent.

"Why are they all concentrated in this direction," I asked, "just like another great city within that enormous city of yours?" For we were driving along all the time; and all the time there were more Blacks.

"The Black Belt extends like this for ten miles east; and it gets poorer and poorer, and blacker and blacker."

"Did you park them here deliberately, like the Southerners?"

"Not at all. When they first came here from the South in swarms, to work in the factories during the war, they were scattered in all directions in our working-class suburbs. Then some of them—smiling, sharp, shifty hucksters—made their 'pile' and bought little houses out this way. The district was going down then, but still quite respectable: all Whites. The newcomers invaded it as Negroes do—noisily. That created a void around them. Their neighbours left, selling their houses for what they would fetch, which wasn't much, because by now there was nobody but more Negroes in the

market for them. Then all the rest of the Negroes promptly flocked here. Apart from the ambitious ones—and they're few and far between—Negroes always prefer to live among themselves, in their own Black, happy-go-lucky environment."

"There's not much doubt," I murmured, saddened by the sight of so many tumble-down walls, "that their idea of town planning is just to let things slide. I shouldn't fancy them as neighbours myself, if I owned property in Chicago. But then, why were their ancestors ever brought into exile from the land where the coconuts grow, and where you can live in a hut made of leaves?"

"What worries us isn't the past, but the future," retorted Albert. "If business is slow in improving, as it's likely to be, there'll be no room for these Blacks, and when they come to the end of their resources they'll just die of starvation. They can't go back to the South, because hundreds of thousands of poor Whites have got their old jobs there."

"There have been plenty of victims in this Black-White clash in the past," said I, "and it seems to have a nasty look about it now. In short, the former owners of these little houses that have gone Negro will soon be able to buy them back for a song—and then I suppose they'll disinfect them. . . . Tell me, didn't some of these Negroes who made their pile during the boom marry White women?"

"A few did."

"But by now they're divorced, no doubt? Rats always leave a sinking ship."

I didn't insist on lingering in that Black Belt, whose ghastly caricature of civilisation struck me as blaspheming the true bent of the African. But all day long, while Albert showed me miracles of civilisation, I was haunted, as a White, by the idea of this heavy burden of racial sin, by the graveyard smell of it, by something like remorse for it.

And so was Albert. His poise of mind was such that the judgment of William Lloyd Garrison, quoted to me by the canteen-keeper in the Memphis train—"Slavery—a covenant with Death!"—was bound to strike a responsive chord in him too.

So, as we drove round Chicago, and then at dinner, in connection with any number of other subjects which we discussed with the frankness usual between two men whose common standard of education bridges their difference of nationality, we kept on returning to the Black problem.

"I'm fond of our 'Niggers,' you know," Albert told me, with obvious sincerity. "I belong to organisations of all kinds for helping them, encouraging them, educating their children. In my own faculty at the university we have six Negro clerks. Everybody talks about their faults; but I know what good qualities they have, how sensitive they are, and how hard it is for them to live among Whites."

"What has been our greatest sin against them?" I wondered. "Is it the original one of transplanting these natives of Guinea into a mechanical civilisation based on money, and into a climate which demands fur coats? Or is it having shown them, through the birth of any number of mulattoes, ***born of Negro mothers and White fathers***, that cross-breeding among men and women of the two races is quite possible? . . . Or, finally, is it flaunting the White woman before their eyes for them to worship, and telling them not to touch her as though she were an angel, when they know perfectly well that she is no more than a woman, with all the weakness of the flesh? Our race has committed all these sins against them."

It was then, after staring for a moment at the spectacle of American women in evening dress who surrounded us at the hotel where we were dining—it was then that

my friend Albert repeated to me that conclusion of mine, backed by the highest authority:

"There shall be forgiveness for all sins."

"Yes," said I, "I quite agree. Still, this Divine indulgence seems to apply to a celestial sphere which is not concerned with our immediate problems. For my part, I believe that here below we pay for our sins in advance. You American Whites should at least try not to be made to pay ***too dearly*** by ignoring your real responsibilities."

He slapped me on the back with his plump preacher's hand; and I could see, by the twinkle in his eyes behind his glasses, that he thought my theology a joke.

After that, he drove me back to my own hotel. It was only ten o'clock at night. But Albert goes to bed early, or perhaps he had some work to do. Besides, I was yawning. He must have thought I was very tired, as I might well be after a day's round of sightseeing.

Let me make public confession, however, in accordance with the custom of certain American sects, that this tiredness of mine was sheer fraud. Another sin—and this time a sin all my own! In fact, I was eager to round off my discovery of Chicago by another series of investigations which might look less blameless, and which I should have blushed to suggest to my friend Albert, tolerant though he might be. I had, in short, premeditated deserting one expert guide for another.

Once I was in the lift and speeding up to the fifth floor, the lift-boy, impassive in Albert's presence on the ground-floor, unfroze and said to me in French:

"Well, do we doll up and go to it?"

"And how, my dear Arsène!" said I, digging him in the ribs.

This lift-boy in a Chicago hotel happened to come from Toulouse. Ever since my first appearance in his life we had been something more than two fellow-countrymen meeting: we had become a pair of accomplices.

Arsène at once appreciated that it was my business as an investigator to explore the underworld of Chicago as well as its more respectable surface; and with this underworld he was acquainted pretty thoroughly, though quite honourably, just as a dilettante.

Ever since I left the thrilling capital of Illinois—I look forward to returning to it often as a welcome guest—informative letters from Professor Albert G., letters full of philosophy, humour and penetration in all kinds of spheres have certainly been one of my greatest delights. But, from time to time, I also get letters from my faithful comrade, Arsène, giving me his opinion about American politics and telling me stories about the life of poor French people in Chicago. I am bound to say that these very different, but no less human letters touch me too—and sometimes depress me. It is very interesting to meet "stars" on the world's great stage; but simple "supers" can often tell you even more about what goes on behind the scenes. I should have been a poor traveller if I did not look for experience wherever I could find it, and get together with likeable people on any rung of the social ladder.

"Fine," said Arsène. "I shall be off duty for the night in a quarter of an hour. Give me five minutes more, to get into my tuxedo—I've got it at the bottom of the elevator-shaft—you get into evening clothes meanwhile, and we'll go."

"You remember what specially interests me, Arsène—Black men, White women? . . ."

" Yes, monsieur," said he, as we stopped at my floor. "You want to see brothels where the girls are White, the clients Black, the bullies Black, and the proprietress a Negress, don't you? Well, I can get a man who used to be a colleague of mine to show

you a dozen or more of them. He's a 'roper' now—ropes in customers for night-clubs, speakeasies and low dance-halls, you know. He knows all about everything. I'm just a schoolboy beside him. I'll send him a bell-boy while we're changing, and get him to meet us at Rolic's. That's a place on Twenty-second started by Al Capone."

"Arsène," said I, "you're an 'ace' among tacticians."

II

The bell-boy brought back a message that Arsène's friend, the roper, couldn't meet us at Rolic's, but would meet us later at a less conspicuous spot. To kill time, meanwhile, we wandered up and down White Way, Chicago's great theatre and cabaret street. We glanced into several restaurants and dance-halls with nothing particularly remarkable about them. Here and there, however, I caught sight of a few men who were clearly Coloured. I asked my guide whether, in this tolerant North, they were allowed to dance in public with White women.

Arsène laughed.

"Suppose," he suggested, "a more or less respectable lady, a divorcee or a kept woman, takes it into her head to dress up her handsome mulatto chauffeur as a gentleman—just like myself in your company? And suppose she takes him with her to the Café Alex or College Inn for a night out? Well, the two of them certainly wouldn't be shown the door. But they'd be tucked away as best they could at a table in a corner; any manager would be glad to see the back of them, for some Southern customer might be scandalised and start a scene. Apart from that, since the war Chicago people are more or less used to anything. They've seen all sorts of things—and done all sorts of things. In fact, some girls of the 'jazz-mad' generation would stare at such a couple with more than a little curiosity. And the next time a good-looking Coloured fellow made eyes at them in the Underground or in a shop, instead of being furious they'd smile back at him, and give him their telephone number if he was bold enough to speak to them. That's the way many a bad mess starts."

"Would you say there are a lot of girls as rash as all that, Arsène?"

"No, Monsieur, I shouldn't. They're the exception, especially in decent social circles. And, if you want to be fair, you'd better say so—more especially as Americans are naturally very touchy if anybody says a word against their girls' morals."

"It's just the same in every country, my dear fellow. In France, too, we're not so fond of people who lump the irreproachable majority of our women in with such 'bachelor-girls,' such ' demi-virgins,' as we may happen to have."

"Here in the States, for that matter, it's mostly the adult woman who goes wrong—and it's often her husband's fault. The 'gold-diggers' are a very small squadron of irregulars in the great regular army of American girls. You know the old story, don't you? A girl is held up by a highwayman. He takes her purse, and she makes no attempt to defend herself. Then he wants her watch and her bracelets, and she hands them over, panic-stricken. Finally he demands a kiss—and she knocks him out!"

"A fine 'sport' of modesty!""

"But that's exactly what might happen, you know. They've all got the Puritan tradition in them, despite the flesh and the devil; and the Devil himself couldn't always tell which of the two would get the upper hand."

We turned off White Way into State Street, a broad avenue at right angles to it. The Niagara of electric light which gives White Way its name diminished, and the skyscrapers, dimly visible but still stern, ceased to glower down at us.

We penetrated into a darkness permeated with a rather chilly mist. I was glad that I had slipped a raincoat over my dinner-jacket suit. It had the advantage, too, that with the collar turned up it would hide my attire, if its respectability seemed out of place. By this time any number of Blacks were emerging out of the damp dark, as though by way of showing that this Northern climate had in no way cured them of the noctambulism peculiar to their race.

We had not yet got to the crossing of Seventh Street when Arsène stopped me at the first of a series of "Burlesks," music-halls remarkable for their frank obscenity, such as I had already visited in San Francisco. But here these music-halls—admission, ten cents—drew their audiences almost entirely from Negroes; and the women who sang, then gradually undressed themselves before these audiences, and, once naked, shimmied in that most suggestive way, were White women.

On their behalf, I am bound to say that these poor creatures were so elderly, so ill-favoured that they made me feel ashamed simply on that account. But, after all, they were White women—or, at least, so light-skinned that they might be mistaken for White women. The Black men gaped at this heart-rending spectacle with something like worship. Then they clapped their big hands to make the women give an encore.

There was not merely one of these bizarre temples. There were at least half a dozen of them, all the way to notorious Twenty-second, sometime the street of Al Capone and the gangsters.

The darkness, the fuliginous, greasy humidity grew thicker. The buildings on either side, still high, but poorly lit, became more and more ugly and sinister. They were the same colour as the Black people who prowled around on the sticky pavements.

Next, with the Blacks mingled Chinese. Electric signs again flared on either side of the street. Most of them belonged to Asiatic restaurants. The few White passers-by, belated workmen, hollow-cheeked and poorly clad, conveyed an impression of servitude and wretchedness in marked contrast with the carefree, well-fed look of the Coloured people.

There are moments when a great city seems to surrender the secret of its formula to the newcomer. Chicago, that monstrous masterpiece of Europeans transplanted to America, suddenly presented itself to me as infected not only with the virus of Africa, but also with that of Asia. It struck me that here my race was surrounded by forces on the watch. I could not make out just how strong these forces were, or just what they meant; but undoubtedly they could be summed up as a threat.

At Rolic's this disquieting impression of mine vanished, for I found myself back in a normal night-club for the entertainment of my brethren, the Whites: a kind of outpost of White Way. But I was not in Chicago simply to amuse myself, so I bade my faithful Arsène get on with his guiding.

"You ought to have seen Rolic's when the gangs were top dogs and Al Capone lorded it over all of them," said Arsène. "But that's all over now."

"The gangsters are finished, eh? Then there isn't anything startling left in Chicago?"

"Perhaps," replied Arsène, thoughtfully, "there's just what you're studying: the Negroes. And here they line up with the Yellows. I don't know that it's a particularly healthy combination for us."

He broke off. A little man in a Cossack cap and a befrogged coat, standing on the pavement of East Eighteenth Street in front of an antiquated grey motor-car, was bowing and scraping to me from afar off.

“That’s my friend Michael, the roper,” exclaimed Arsène. “It’s part of his job to lick tourists’ boots, you know. I’ll go and tell him that you’re a friend of mine and that he can cut out the grovelling act with you.”

“O.K., Arsène,” said I.

Michael, that expert in the Chicago underworld, had the stereotyped youthfulness, the aquiline nose, and the big eyes, full of romance and bile, of a Balkan Jew, or perhaps of an Afghan by descent. He was even more obviously a half-breed than a man of Macao or Algiers. When Arsène greeted him with the conventional American phrase: “Hullo, you son of a bitch!” I could tell from the lift of his eyebrows that he scarcely saw much of a joke in it.

After his fit of obsequiousness, he suddenly turned stiff and scornful. He paid the least possible attention to Arsène as he sang my praises.

“You wait for us there,” Michael instructed Arsène, pointing to a dubious-looking Italian tavern. “I’ll take this gentleman with me in my car by myself. I don’t know how long we shall be. I’ll show him everything, even the worst, just as I ***would to somebody who was taking over my business***.”

I didn’t much like leaving Arsène and plunging into the underworld of such a city with this stranger; but this dazzling promise of Michael’s stifled my fears. So I sat down beside him in his grey car, and we drove off into the heart of the mist, amid red and green signals, deafening klaxons, and spectral apparitions of pagodas, Rhineland castles, factories and viaducts. A few turns sufficed to make me lose all sense of direction.

Michael did not say a word. He chose the better part of letting his deeds speak for him. We followed a long barrier of trees to our left. After that, he stopped at the gate of a tumbledown villa, such as I had seen in the daytime with Albert. As he helped me out of the car he explained:

“Black district. South Park Avenue. There may not be anything for us to see here ***at the moment***; but it’s a centre of information about what you’re after. It belongs to a Negro, who lives here himself and puts girls into training here before making them really work for him.”

We climbed the steps, and knocked with a Renaissance knocker. A fat old Negress in a print dress opened the door. She stared at me in alarm, but Michael’s voice brought a friendly grin to her face.

“Well, Rose? Carl not at home?”

“Youse here, boss? Hallelujah! He no come at all.”

“Ain’t you got any regular White broads, Mammy?”

“Not even a kiddy just now. Chinese bosses got all the stuff.”

Michael took me back to the car.

“Mammy Rose isn’t bringing up any babies just now. But I know where she sent her last batch.”

“White girls, eh?”

“Of course.”

“Not under age, I hope?”

“Well, the Chinese like them better at sixteen than sixty,” he growled.

We made a couple of sharp turns and drove along a parallel avenue, bearing the complimentary Parisian name “Vincennes.” Here the house was flush with the pavement. A staircase nearly as steep as a chute led straight upstairs. About the place hung a smell made up of garlic, oil, “Black Narcissus” and wool: everything African, but nothing Asiatic, I would have sworn.

“It’s exclusively for Negroes—and clandestine, of course,” Michael confirmed.

He went upstairs first. It was better so, for a second Megaera as black as night, no less massive than Rose, but corseted and wearing a red silk dress, barred the way interrogatively. At the sight of me she shuddered all over, and I thought she was going to hurl herself upon us and throw me out. Michael had a long, pleading colloquy with her, while he held her back just as a prop shores up a house-front.

"You're to pay four dollars—that's twice as much as usual—because you're a White," he told me at length; "and you're not to lay a finger on one of the girls."

"I've no intention," I replied.

Hattie, the "matron," admitted us into a passage which she filled so completely that, if she got any fatter, she would simply have to move somewhere else. On the walls, too high for her massive contours to brush them, hung "French" engravings—probably made in Germany—entitled ***Reveil***, ***Toilette***, ***Deshabille***, ***Coucher***, and so on.

Everything still smacked of the Negro—but Hattie would suffice for that—in the "salon," where four girls in thin dressing-gowns were listening to the wireless and manicuring their nails.

All four of them were White. Two were brunettes, and two blondes. They had not yet lost all their bloom, being presumably impervious to wood-alcohol. Their faces were pretty, but inexpressive. They had pretty white necks and shoulders.

"Well, have a look at them," said Michael. "They don't look like martyrs, or even prisoners, do they? But, now that I've told Hattie you don't belong to the Federal police, she'll assure you that all the clients here are Blacks."

Hattie nodded sulkily. The girls smiled at me contemptuously—lest I should despise them first.

"And another thing," Michael went on, "is that their 'sweet backs,' their bullies, are Blacks too. I know three of them myself. One of them has two of these girls here at Hattie's: Ishbel, that blonde, and Peg, that brunette."

The girl who seemed the most alive of the lot seized Michael by his coat-collar from behind, as though she were going to strangle him with her rosy hands.

"What do you want to bring a pale-face here for, you dirty dog?" she asked him politely. "We like them strong, with crinkly hair and black satin skins. Fine Darkies—that's what we like. My man's one of them; and he's always in a good temper, and he never gets drunk."

She mimicked the soft, childish accent of the Negroes: "Gawd bless mah soul! . . . I'll be hanged if I ever give myself to another White man."

Her three comrades and Hattie nearly killed themselves laughing. I made some allowance for the girl's ***amour-propre***; but, apart from that, why shouldn't they be quite sincere?

"Anyhow," I remarked, "all these girls are well over twenty-five. They're not Rose's 'babies,' are they?"

"Do you want to see one?" said Michael, who was now getting worked up to his job. He drew Hattie into the passage.

"Where's that Milwaukee kid Carl found?" he asked her.

"I sent her back to him," said the Negress, rather embarrassed. "She was a little devil—and a dope fiend. She wouldn't hustle."

"But she was a darn pretty kid. What has he done with her?"

"I advised him to employ her with the Chinese, because they're more easy-going," Hattie confessed, eyeing me askance under her dark eyebrows. "So then Carl fixed her up with the other Hattie, Mrs. Hattie B. He bought her a fine party frock, and he

takes her to the chop sueys. If he can get her to smoke opium it will be all right. Otherwise, one of these days she'll run away, and then there'll be trouble."

"Let's be on our way," said Michael to me. "So long, Mammy."

We went back to the car; and I am sure Hattie called down African maledictions on my head.

"What's this distinction between Black and Yellow clients?" I asked.

"The Yellows, the Chinese, want White girls, just the same as the Negroes. ***But they always remain just clients***. They've got to pay. The girls never get fond of them, unless the Yellows manage to get them completely under the influence of opium; and, in that case, it's the opium they love. You never find a Chinese bully here—I mean a Yellow for whom a White woman prostitutes herself deliberately and of her own free will. Nor will you find a White bully who has Negro girls in his string. But Blacks supported by several women, ***some White, others Black***—that's quite common, both in Chicago and elsewhere."

"Why do Black men have this advantage over Yellows and Whites?"

"You'd better ask the girls."

That gave me plenty to think about during the short drive before our next call. Here I was, in the heart of America, once more finding the old race of the sons of Ham developing this new and astonishing appetite of theirs for our White Venuses, and also once more finding them reduced to buying White women's favours. It was just the same thing here as at Shanghai and all over China. On the other hand, the Blacks, infinitely less gallant, infinitely less wealthy, were able to obtain that supreme privilege: they were not merely tolerated, they were welcomed.

I had just caught a glimpse of a profound law of sex appeal, quite separate from civilisation and indeed opposed to it. For the Chinese are just as civilised as we are, if not more. Yet the White woman, that paragon of feminine aristocracy, offered an affront to them all over the world. Instead of them, she took as her indubitable favourites—since she was prepared to pay for them!—either these Black men who were still largely animal, or at least coarse White men, the lowest scum of adventurers.

Was there not, in the secret heart of this mystery, a true phenomenon of purely physical magnetism ***or***, ***to be more exact, animal magnetism***? An attraction, a fascination wholly carnal, which diminishes in proportion as man, from century to century, becomes more really civilised, more ***de-animalised***?

Michael broke in upon the ideas with which I was playing.

"East Forty-third Street," he announced.

This time there was no doubt about it. The winding, carpeted staircase, the doorways with their tinkling glass ***portieres***, smacked of burnt almond, the sovereign odour of Asia, Opium! On the first floor there was also a quite distinct whiff of ether, that accessory poison. A Negro appeared, not a Negress; for the "matron"—Black too—was absent. So much the better, perhaps; for she might have refused to let me see the White girl beloved by the Chinese, the "Milwaukee kid."

The Negro listened to Michael, stammered, scratched his hair-oiled skull, and finally went off to make arrangements. . . .

Another night, far away from here, in Hong-Kong, I had followed a stray of the streets even more conscienceless and a hundred times more pitiable than this Michael. I had asked him, in accordance with that necessity which often makes an investigator ashamed of himself, to show me in this Asiatic city—under the high-minded administration of Great Britain, it is true: but Asia remains Asia—***a White girl under age prostituted and enslaved***.

The girl who was frankly, affectionately introduced to me by a quite decent-looking old Chinese couple was undoubtedly a half-breed, but she was as rosy and reddish-haired as a pure English girl. I had got away from the place as soon as I could, worrying over the question whether I ought not to denounce this crime to the police. Or out there, in this age-old land of the ***mui-tsai***, was not this a commonplace thing, a normal thing, an inevitable thing, quite well known, only too well known?

I felt that here I was going to find myself in the same dilemma. The door of a room opened, and a girl who was obviously very young came towards me, closely followed by the Negro. He was a head taller than she was. If she had tried to break away, perhaps he would have hit her, even in my presence.

But how could she tell that I was in any way different from the other men she saw there?

For that matter, she showed no sign of being unhappy or under constraint. She was wearing a decent, quiet little dress: doubtless the one she used to wear before Carl fitted her out with the swell one which she put on only when she went out to Chinese restaurants. She was graceful rather than pretty. But her face, with its snub nose and its bright, frank eyes, under the masses of blonde curls parted in the middle, was characteristic of the North American peasant girl in the region bordering on the Great Lakes, where life demands strength and patience.

Michael gripped me by the arm. I had promised not to ask any questions.

The girl stopped and stared at me, without a smile. She did not look either ill or ill-treated. But something about this creature born for a decent, open-air life bespoke the stifling, stupefying influence of an indoor existence, varied by orgies which she found meaningless, if not painful. It bespoke also initiation into the use of intoxicants: bad alcohol and everything else of which this house reeked.

"Come on, that's enough," said Michael. We went downstairs again.

"She's under age," said I. "How did she get mixed up with these Negroes and Chinese?"

"Her parents weren't able to feed her," replied Michael, testily. "She felt she was a burden on them, so she packed up her traps and came to Chicago—without a railway ticket."

"You mean as a 'hobo'—like the Scottsboro Blacks?" I murmured.

"Yes, exactly. But it wasn't a Black who debauched her. It was a White, a young fellow of good family, who found her starving on the Loop last January."

"And then?"

"And then he amused himself with her for a month. And then he got tired of her. She started wandering about again, without a cent. Carl took charge of her. Since then, she's lacked for nothing."

"She may have more than she wants. . . ."

"Well, why shouldn't that be her fate, when there was no room for her at home on the farm? For that matter, I believe there's a surplus of girls all over the States."

"All right, don't let's argue. . . . Do the police know about her?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Chicago isn't the jungle. But, if the police suppressed illegalities in all countries, it would be a queer world. Don't worry your head about the ways of this city. If it was known that you'd been there, maybe you'd be sleeping in prison yourself at this moment!"

I said nothing. Michael was only too right. I thought about my friend Albert. If he knew! . . .

Once more I was back in the grey car.

"And what now, Michael? Something sadder still?"

"On the contrary, a spot of amusement! Just a glance at the beneficiaries of this business. The best speakeasy for Black bullies is quite close: the Four-O-Four. Paradise next door to Hell, see?"

III

The barred peep-hole which had opened in response to our ring clicked shut again. The door of the Four-O-Four was not yet open to us. We stood on the threshold in the damp alley in whose depths the speakeasy was hidden.

I had soon become familiar with such clandestine bars in America. Elsewhere their precautions were justified only by the illegal sale of alcohol. Here, to this reason were added the desire of the Blacks to remain among themselves and also another illegality. So the chucker-out had summoned the boss before letting in an unknown White, even when somebody so sure as Michael vouched for him.

At length the little square opening, just big enough to aim a machine-gun through if need be, gave us a glimpse of another pair of swarthy eyes. Then the steel door was opened ajar.

The chucker-out was a really colossal yellowish Negro. In accordance with the ritual of his trade, he squeezed my ringers hard as he shook hands with me. He hurt me a lot; but I kept on smiling, and henceforth I had the esteem of this lump of muscle made man. As for the boss, he bordered on olive, and I have never seen anybody who looked so exactly like Dumas ***père***—who, you will recall, was half-Haitian—as this bootlegger. In his younger days he must have been as burly as our friend Porthos.

The bar-room, with its oak tables, its nickelled counter, and its advertisements of sporting events and beverages "positively without liquor," was just the same as any other, neither more nor less comfortable. It had, of course, another exit, betrayed by a draught which mingled whiffs of the latrine with those musk perfumes manufactured to suit the skins and tickle the nostrils of Africans.

We seated ourselves on two stools in front of the derisory notice: "No mixing permitted." The boss promptly offered us whisky; but Michael pulled the standardised flat bottle out of his hip-pocket. "Have some of mine," he said to me; "you'll find it better." It struck me as abominable; but I hadn't come here for the sake of my palate.

I looked around me with extreme curiosity; for I felt that a man of my race, not provided with the ***dignus entrare*** by the smallest trace of cross-breeding, was exceptionally favoured in being allowed to breathe the air of the stronghold of the Black bullies of Chicago.

Except for myself, all the males present belonged to the Coloured people. Even Michael, since our entrance into the Four-O-Four, had undergone that process of nervous mimetism peculiar to certain animals, and now showed himself tinged with Negro blood.

This factor created an astounding, indeed unique, element of novelty in the atmosphere of prostitution, which I was beginning to regard as immutable all the world over. In all other haunts of it into which I had penetrated, even in Shanghai, always the White man reigned supreme over the women, just as he reigned supreme over any other negotiable commodity. A Black bully was so exceptional that one paid no attention to him.

But here there were no White men. Nevertheless the women, whether they were White, mulatto, or Negro, obviously all lived in subjection to men: ***all of them on a footing of equality*** in this kind of domestication of passion, just like black and white sheep in one and the same flock.

These prostitutes and their bullies, of course, belonged to the dregs of the great city. In what I saw there, I never imagined any argument dishonouring to the millions upon millions of normal, chaste American women, asleep at that very moment, who were certainly not dreaming about the charm of Negroes. But, whenever any of my friends express astonishment that I always seem to like the society of the sediment which you find in all countries, I reply: "If you make up your mind to ignore the dregs, simply because they are dregs, you will never understand the innermost mysteries of feeling between the two sexes."

I looked around me; and I saw opposite me, playing cards, a young, well-dressed Negro; a young Negress; and another girl, White-blonde, a trifle common, but quite attractive.

The three of them were drinking, smoking, laughing and exchanging jokes like old comrades as well as lovers. The White girl lost the hand, and the Negro gathered up the stakes. Hereupon she jumped up and flung herself upon him to get her money back, proclaiming that he had cheated.

She pinched his heavy cheeks, the colour of quetsch. She pulled the lobes of his ears, which were paler—lilac white. She ended by flopping on his knees and assailing him with smacking kisses.

"Thief!" she cried. "Bad boy! Give me back my money, my Negro, my black cherry!" She kept on till she was panting, breathless.

Meanwhile, over the shoulder of the Negro, who let her tease him as though he were a good-tempered dog, she challenged me with an air half-daring, half-sheepish, just like a monkey, at one and the same time delighted to scandalise me and fearful lest I should show disgust.

Since, in this environment, it was precisely the time of maximum feminine activity, most of those around me were "sweet men." They were amusing themselves at their favourite games, pinochle, crap and red dog.

Two absolutely White women, one of them fat and mature, the other very thin and a bit faded, came out of the cloak-room. They knew Michael.

"Hullo, good lookin'," he said to the first of them. "You've disappeared from the Haymarket lately."

"And how! The Halstead sergeant got me put away. Happily my Bobbie knows how to spend money, when he can't help it. He got me out in a week. But I'm keeping quiet for the moment, see? Still, telephone me if you've got a rich client who wants to be relieved of his wealth."

"I'm just back from hospital," said the second, "and a bad time, too. I got a case. Slim paid for everything, but now he's flat. I wish you'd find some business for me quick, ***even in a small way***."

She glanced at me in a way pitiful to see, obsessed by her hurry to pick up a few dollars and so make things easier for Slim, her Black master, a horrible-looking nabob with a receding forehead. Bobbie, the other bully, on the contrary, had an imposing presence, a philosopher's brow, and almost a clergyman's unction.

A new couple were admitted through the barred door. They, too, were acquaintances of Michael's. They had been to some show or other, and were in evening dress. I was glad to see them, for hitherto my dinner-jacket had seemed really out of place.

The Negro's tail-coat proclaimed a good tailor, and the man, an athletic fellow of about twenty-five, was too handsome to look ridiculous in evening clothes. His white shirt-front emphasised his blackness, as though he were wearing a mask made out of anthracite. He wore magnificent pearl studs.

“They’re a present from me to this darned Tony of mine,” the girl with him remarked for Michael’s edification. She was White: pretty, refined-looking, flirtatious and attractive as a girl has to be to earn the price of such trinkets through her sex-appeal.

“Still honeymooning, I see, Mona,” replied Michael.

“Yes, it’s Love with a big ‘L,’ ” Mona assented, as simply as though she had never stroked any other woolly head in her life. “You’ve no idea what a joke he is, this little man of mine, when he squints down at those fine studs of his out in society. You’d think he was a child dressed up as a Redskin chief—wouldn’t you, dearie?”

“Well, didn’t I buy you a fine dress?” retorted Tony.

“And he chose it for me, too,” added the girl excitedly. “He’s certainly got good taste. I make him do all my shopping for me, undies and everything. Besides, he loves doing things for his harem—don’t you, Pasha?”

The two of them went and sat down with the trio whose exuberance I had noticed. Mona kissed the Negress just as naturally as her sister by race.

“Tony is an acrobatic dancer,” my guide explained to me. “He does a special turn with two other Blacks at the dance-hall in White Way where Mona is an instructress. He also has a mulatto woman in a ‘Burlesk’ and another White woman, not so young but still good-looking, who runs an establishment which serves the police as a trap.”

“In short,” said I, after a brief silence, “all this is tolerated by the authorities?”

“What else can you expect? In America, just the same as everywhere else, the fact that the police want to get on the track of more dangerous criminals makes them indulgent towards irregulars who are guilty of nothing more than prostitution and other minor offences. They constitute the froth on civilisation, in which society can recognise its real scourges.”

“Spoken like a regular philosopher, Michael! So the ***habitués*** of the Four-O-Four are protected by this lofty point of view on the part of the police, much more than the fact that it’s supposed to be secret?”

“Of course. The Halstead sergeant who roped Trixie in a fortnight ago had long known just what she was doing. He must have had some special reason for arresting a girl so long in the game as that! On the other hand, she probably isn’t just bragging when she says that Bobbie got her released with the help of dollar-notes. Recently we witnessed an extraordinary struggle here between a bully and the police. The police rounded up all his girls, and hunted him out of one district after another. Well, he got the girls released, had the proceedings against them suspended, and finally got the charges against them withdrawn. The only reason why he didn’t triumph in the end—this was in 1930—was that President Roosevelt’s election meant a root and branch change of police personnel. His influential friends lost their jobs. So in the long run he was beaten.”

“ I see,” said I. “But tell me something else. In this Republic of yours where everything has its own organisation, hasn’t the worthy trade of Black men supported by White women created a defence force, its own ‘gang’?”

He smiled a discreet smile.

“It’s probably the last gang that survives,” he murmured, “at least in Chicago. It has its own treasury: in this case, strictly speaking a ‘Black fund.’ It has its own lawyers, its own Pressmen, even its own clergy, White as well as Coloured, who are always ready to thunder against the hypocrisy and vice of the Whites, those perverters of the innocent Niggers.”

“I perceive that the ‘Niggers’ have studied your fine American civilisation to advantage. They’ve ‘tumbled to it,’ in short.”

Michael twisted round on his stool. This little Oriental had a truly Byzantine sense of subtlety.

"Yes," he agreed, as he poured himself out some more of his awful whisky. "Many of them have developed a lot, especially since the war. These women often spoil them. If they learn lying and greed and trickery, it's through the women, or for the sake of the women. But any crook, any adventurer, even any old stager, who is a Negro is ***always worth two of any White*** who has sunk into the depths."

"Michael, I never expect to hear any finer praise of the Black race!"

"I'm speaking quite seriously," replied this distinguished ruffian. "The Negro is essentially a good fellow. He takes life easily, he's not selfish, he's good-humoured, and he's not given to hatred. Hence, for that matter, his attraction for the girls you've seen here, all crazy about their poodle pups. In fact, there's quite a resemblance between that breed of dog, with his black wool, always yapping, always ready for a game, and the Negro. The Black people have had such dreadful hidings in the course of their history that it's a marvel they're still able to stand up, let alone be so light-hearted."

"Well, I suppose they're intoxicated with sunshine once and for all."

"You never said a truer word. Just compare them with the American Whites. They'll drink anything, even petrol, to give themselves a 'kick,' an illusion, an artificial gaiety. Their drunkenness is dirty and destructive. On the other hand, the Black always seems a bit lit up, even when you see him cold sober. And if you get him to take opium, even if he loses all control of himself in complete intoxication, you'll find that in the worst of his excess he'll preserve some trace of decency about him. He may show himself up a brute, just like a wounded animal in the jungle. But he won't show himself a completely new man who has suddenly gone rotten. . . . His innermost soul isn't something degraded."

"You mean that's what attracts the commonest prostitute, just as much as the 'Darky's' jollity?"

"The girls? Above all, ***they save themselves from boredom*** with the Negroes," declared Michael. "A prostitute's life isn't much fun, you know. The Negro is the antidote to melancholy on earth. Don't you know the story about the Black and the White who changed skins for a day?"

"No, but I'm anxious to hear it."

"Well, it all began in a bar, as it happens. If the White wasn't tight, he had at least imbibed one over the eight. In any case, he couldn't stomach the mere idea of substitution, which he regarded as such an insult to his noble race. 'Look here,' he said to the poor Black, 'I'll offer to spend twenty-four hours inside that coal-bag of yours, just for fun.' 'That's quite easy, boss,' replied the Black, timidly, 'so long as I take your place as a White meanwhile.' The White pretty nearly flew into a rage. 'What do you mean, you rascal?' he cried. 'Are you trying to pull my leg?' You see, he didn't believe there was anything in the world outside the Whites' knowledge of medicine and chemistry. . . ."

"Which, alas, is still rather limited!"

"But the Black knew a thing or two about magic. Exchange of skins between two living human beings presented no difficulty to him, so long as both parties consented. To cut the story short, the White challenged this wretched savage, as he called him, to perform such a miracle. All at once, he felt a bit giddy and slightly creepy. He looked at himself in the bar mirror. Hell, he saw that he had turned woolly-haired and thick-lipped: the complete Negro!"

"He must have been quite upset."

"He was so ashamed, so crazy, that he staggered out of the bar. He tried to go home; but his neighbours insulted and threatened him because he was a vile Coloured man. He caught sight of his ***fiancée*** in the street, and was going to ask her to help him. Then the passers-by half lynched him, because he was a Negro and had dared to approach a White woman. Finally he got away from the angry crowd, bruised and beaten all over, and went and hid himself in the only place left open to him: the special Black quarter. There, twenty-four hours sufficed to subject him to humiliations of all kinds which drove him to despair."

"It sounds like a film scenario," I interrupted. "Fine twin settings, too. And what happened to the Black who had meanwhile become a White?"

"I'm coming to him. As I was saying, the ex-White was in despair in his dark skin. He said to himself: 'The magician who caught me in this trap of his will never give me back my beloved lily-white skin, that emblem of such priceless privileges. It's not just for one day that I've been tricked, robbed of my skin and expelled from my own race. It's until I die—and what a wretched life I shall have to lead! But I'll never be able to stand it. I'd sooner commit suicide.' Just at this moment he caught sight of a White, a human being of that higher category, that kind of demi-god. This White seemed to be searching for somebody anxiously. 'Ah,' exclaimed the victim, 'there I am! There's myself as I used to be: my white face, my white skin on the body of that scoundrel who tricked me into this exchange!' He rushed at his partner in the pact, the ex-Negro, ready to skin him alive. But the ex-Negro was in even more of a hurry. 'Hullo, boss,' he said, 'I'm delighted to find you at last. Don't let's wait twenty-four hours. Take this fine skin of yours back quick, and give me back that old hide of mine.' 'Why, you idiot,' exclaimed our gentleman, taken aback, 'do you mean to say you don't appreciate the inestimable advantages which are within your reach, thanks to my skin?' 'Yes, boss,' replied the ex-Negro, 'it's all fine. . . . But you know, since I ceased to feel myself a Negro, amid your brethren the Whites ***I'm bored, oh so bored***! I should be bored to death if I couldn't change back with you.' "

"That's not a French fable," I remarked, after applauding it.

"No," Michael agreed, "it's an American fable. We are in the States. A White nation, a great nation; but a bit on the sad side."

"So that's why here in the States, though the 'Colour bar' is as high and as thick as the hull of a battleship, Black bullies have White 'regulars'?"

"Out of every hundred bullies, you may reckon that at least thirty are Negroes or half-breeds. The rest are of Italian, Spanish, Mexican, French and Irish origin rather than Anglo-Saxon."

"I'm glad to hear they come in that order."

"In the eyes of the Black, the White woman is at one and the same time a benefactress whose favours fill him with pride, and a childish, temperamental, superstitious, superficial creature like himself. He can understand her at once, and he knows how to natter her, amuse her, get possession of her and even cure her when she's ill, in accordance with his own peculiar African empiricism."

"You have a very high idea of his talents."

"Look around you. Isn't this just the picture of happiness?"

Meantime, more White women and more Black men had entered that haven, the Four-O-Four. The atmosphere of the place had warmed up, and it was buzzing and vibrating with a quite special kind of hilarity, above the level of what an American would call " pep," and just below the level of what he would call hectic. Among the men, every tint from light coffee-and-milk to dark olive was now represented; and all

their faces radiated good humour. By contrast the girls seemed more dazzlingly milky-white than ever.

The sons of Ham were sheer children transplanted from their nomadic life in West Africa. They were as short of money, troubles and brains as ever; but they were blessed in their inferiority, for they could always accommodate themselves to it with a song. "Come day, go day, you can always have a good time," proclaimed their thick lips backed by fine teeth, their big eyes which looked hilarious even when they were angry.

"Sure, you can bet you' sweet life!" cried one of them, by way of remonstrance.

"Come off of it, you White Nigger! Too much monkey-blood's what's wrong with you," retorted one of the girls, with a laugh.

These White women amusing themselves here had turned back into little girls, ***without sin***, just like Eve at the beginning of ***Genesis***, just like their sisters whom I had admired playing with the Hawaiian beach-boys at Waikiki. This speakeasy resembled the playground of a girls' school.

"No woman nevah ride me. You get me, spitfire?" went on the Negro who was engaged in a jocular lovers' quarrel.

"You think I'm going to mistake you for a tough guy?"

"Well, you still got two legs under you' skirt, ain't you?"

They chased one another round the tables, and then, laughing and breathless, struggled before they kissed behind the counter at which I was sitting. I reflected how stupefied, how disgusted any number of Americans or English would be if they could contemplate this shameful scandal. I was disgusted myself—but I tried to understand.

"Overwrought fillies relaxing," I said to myself. "Perhaps it's essential for some of these over-deified White women!"

"The Negroes seem to me to be forgetting that they are Negroes!" proclaimed the blackest of the lot, parodying the cruel saying of a once celebrated Southern planter. But he evoked the memory of their slave past without a trace of bitterness.

"That's your fault!" cried the White girl who had teased her Negro partner for cheating. "If you'd play us something nice on your ukulele, instead of wetting your whistle so often, those two wouldn't be playing tick. They'd be dancing, and so would we."

He needed no second invitation. To make music so that others may dance amuses a Negro just as much as dancing amuses them. He squatted on a stool and cocked his feet up on its rungs. Then from his ukulele, strummed with that ***morbidezza*** which the Polynesians do not possess, accompanying his singing in a minor key, burst forth that magic unique in the world, sufficient in itself to glorify a race: ***Negro music***.

He played nothing very new: shay-shays of the West Indies, jelly-rolls of the Cotton Belt—airs since picked up by all our orchestras. But, while at Mrs. Woollyball's mission I had profoundly felt the mystical religious genius of those incomparable musicians, the Darkies; while at New Orleans, listening to Flossie's adorer, I had understood as I did nowhere else the soothing affection, the ***maternal*** fraternity of these men—here, where a harsher atmosphere, a ruder sexual law prevailed, I was struck by their gift of expressing no less potently ***the whole of love***, physical and sentimental.

In short, their gamut really ranged from the softest of modulations to lull a frightened child to sleep to hymns offering the lament of age to Heaven. All human life, with the finest of its delights, was embraced in it.

Sooner than I should have liked—for he had had enough of showing me what is not usually shown in Chicago—Michael took me back to the Italian tavern. My good

friend Arsène, after consuming any number of ***zabaglioni***, was sitting hunched up there patiently waiting for us.

"Well, monsieur?" he asked me, as we walked back to the hotel together through the misty, mysterious streets.

"I think, Arsène," I replied, "that thanks to you I have now got a good idea of the White-Black situation in Illinois."

"I'm sure Michael did all he could for you. But it remains for you to meet the Negro slaughterers at the Kingpig factory, and also a Negro I know at the mortuary."

"At the mortuary?"

"Yes, that's where I saw him. But he's alive all right—and tenderhearted, too!"

IV

Arsène got leave from his lift at the hotel for an hour or two in the morning in order to escort me to the Kingpig factory. Pilgrimage to these famous Chicago abattoirs, where every part of the pig "except the grunt" is put to some use, has become stereotyped. So has anti-American denunciation of them.

I have no difficulty, indeed, in imagining the horror, the nausea of casual European travellers taken on the organised excursion through the factory as they are rushed through some of its especially bloody departments. But to see nothing else in it would be doing an injustice to this metropolis of canning, which is by now, in fact, a long-established organisation, imitated and perhaps even improved upon in Europe. The massacre of pigs, so much lamented by romantic travellers, struck me as neither more up-to-date nor more revolting than it is at La Villette in Paris. The pigs' throats are still cut by hand with a knife.

At the factory, Arsène "told off" in choice slang the official guides who offered to take me on the regulation round. We dodged a "cop" and climbed ten floors up fire-escapes greasy with animal dust. Then we found ourselves "behind the scenes" in the factory. Our "open sesame" during these unauthorised peregrinations was the name of Arsène's best friend, an overseer in the curing department. On a staircase down which a shift coming off duty were clattering, Arsène met another friend of his. They exchanged a word or two, and then Arsène turned to me.

"Fine," he said. "We're just in time. The man I want you to meet is inside here."

"Who is he?"

"A Negro slaughterer. He's just washing. Come on!" He led me to the shower-baths for the slaughterers, whom I had not yet seen at their terrible job.

In a grey room, shining with the condensed steam on the walls, under the glare of electric lights as naked as himself, we found an athletic Black streaming with water, refreshing himself after his morning's work and getting rid of the traces of it. He still looked rather bestial, for he had not yet begun to think about anything since he stopped slaughtering. But, once he was dried and dressed, he turned into a "Nigger" as jovial as the next, a big blockhead whom you would never suspect of dealing death five hundred times a day.

"Say, Whitey," Arsène's friend said to him, "before you go, show these fellows that letter from your latest White sweetie."

The Black roared with laughter like a small boy, or a monkey. Then he took a fine snake-skin wallet out of the pocket of his well-cut dark jacket, and extracted from it a letter which was now a bit greasy, but had been clean when it arrived: a letter written on note-paper in an artistic shade of mauve, in the flowing handwriting of a woman—an educated woman.

All at once, I recalled similar letters—doubtless written by neurotic and unbalanced women; but would our civilisation create them if it were O.K., as they say in Chicago?—which another guide of mine, Antoine, own brother to Arsène in penetration, had induced some handsome Bedouins to extract from their big cloaks for my benefit at the ancient pyramid at Sakkarah, near Cairo. They, too, just like Whitey's extraordinary correspondence, expressed a feminine desire whose mad impetuosity could be suppressed neither by race, nor caste, nor common sense.

I read the letter. ***She*** asked him to meet her. She may have been pretty or plain; but she was not mercenary.

I stared at this Black Don Juan whom I had just seen stripped: strong, but so coarse! The Bedouins, those lords of the desert, were at least refined-looking, racy, with all the grace of horsemen.

"You've had plenty of other love-letters before this, haven't you?" Arsène's friend asked the Negro. "There's always at least one crazy White woman who'll waste stamps on one of you slaughterers." Whitey gloated, obviously very proud of himself—for there wasn't any question of his being lynched here.

"Well, we don't get quite as many as Patterson in his cell!" he laughed.

"Patterson is the best known of the Negroes condemned to death over the Scottsboro case," Arsène reminded me.

"So he gets his fan mail too, does he?" I murmured. "But that's because he's condemned to death. That's just pity, and the feeling that there may have been a judicial error. If some stray White women write to him, at least their hearts are touched. But why do they write to this slayer of pigs? Why?"

"Come and see one of his colleagues on the job," said my guide. He led me from the shower-baths through a series of doors and corridors. Then, all at once, I found myself on a platform—the same one on which parties of tourists stood—opposite the famous cement scaffold, to which an endless chain slowly but inexorably carried the heavy animals, passive but alive, hanging by one back leg, with their heads downwards.

Two Negroes, in vests and aprons, stood one on either side. The endless chain gave them a rest perhaps every twelfth turn. Meanwhile they waited, listlessly, or sharpening their long knives on the flints that hung from their belts. Then a fresh procession of pigs was borne towards them. The pig's cloven hooves caught on the wall. Each Negro stretched out his arm, loosely, or, if the victim was a large one, at full length. . . .

When he drew his arm back, a crimson velvet ribbon hung from the Negro's wrist, a stream of blood, which dripped into the gutter, vainly washed by running water, beneath the scaffold, and helped to form a carpet of scarlet liquid, with pretty iridescent bubbles. . . .

Intense emotion kept me rooted to the spot. I felt sick; but I could not tear myself away. That unknown woman of my own race who had written to the Negro slaughterer had seen just what I was seeing. What was the matter with her? What frenzy of ***boredom*** made her so crazy? Did she imagine herself hanging from this endless chain, rosy as these pigs, and about to present to that dark hand her White woman's throat? It was a mystery: a mystery of the sickening savagery of ***some*** super-civilised women.

Such, so far as this investigation is concerned, was all the sad gleaning of my expedition to the Kingpig factory. I very nearly omitted it from this book, feeling ashamed of this only too true documentation. I trust that those who shrink from the truth—and I can understand their feelings—will forgive me for including it.

Above all, I trust that ***the millions upon millions of perfectly sound***, ***well-balanced***, ***virtuous American women*** will not take offence through reading into this record a generalisation which I do not intend, or make any mistake about my very justly respectful opinion of them. I know that they would simply be unable to understand the woman who wrote to the slaughterer. They will feel indignant, and then they will conclude: "She's a pathological case." I hope they will also be sorry for her.

But here is something else I saw. If it is no less strange, no less difficult and painful to relate, at least it involves only the Negro, and not a single one of those White women whose very charm dooms them to every kind of pitfall, and to the oddest kind of homage. . . .

"You must excuse me now," said Arsène, when we left the porcine Gehenna. "I must get back to my lift. You'll be able to get on all right without me at the hospital mortuary."

I thanked him. Still feeling squeamish, I wondered what reasons required of me another visit far from attractive.

"Ask for Martin," was all the enlightenment Arsène would give me. "This mortuary, I may tell you," he went on, "is the biggest in the world. That's why I went to have a look at it; and that's how I happened to see something that will certainly set you wondering, if you're as lucky as I was."

So we parted: he to return to the majestic lakeside, and I to plunge into the heart of the city, one-third of the way along endless West Great street.

This is the medical students' district. Its schools of medicine are surrounded by fine shops full of surgical instruments. Here, too, are monumental masons and makers of wreaths: outposts of the cemetery further away.

Of the big hospital itself I saw nothing but its gigantic façade and the entrance hall. Its obliging superintendent, to whom I simply sent in my card, gave me authorisation to go anywhere I liked. But, obsessed by Arsène's suggestion, I asked first of all for the mortuary and Martin. I was given a note to this personage.

I went down to the basement. Here were the rooms where the patients' clothes were disinfected. I began to look back with regret on the Kingpig cauldrons, now that this horrible, sickly smell caught me by the throat. I seemed to be swallowing all the diseases in the world. Still, I plunged heroically into an underground passage. The dry air became icy, and at the same time changed its smell. When I got to the far end, it no longer reeked of the washhouse, but of the charnel-house. I had reached the refrigerating rooms, Martin's macabre realm. Here he lorded it over the mortuary's poor guests. Never had any sovereign such quiet subjects; and, with their perpetual renewal, he could reckon on more than some princes famous in history.

Before I could greet him in person, I had to go through several provinces of his realm: vast, low, icy, mournful rooms, furnished solely with pigeon-holes, shelves, like those of strong-rooms in a bank. But here the pigeon-holes were much bigger; for a body requires more space than a packet of securities.

I was sadly satisfying myself about the contents of these cupboards by reading names, ages and dates on the labels attached to them when Martin presented himself. This worthy guardian of the dead was wearing a white overall; but he was as red in the face as a policeman.

To be sure, he had not chosen a jolly occupation; and, if he was easily put out, I could not very well blame him. The fact remains that we failed to make friends. The superintendent's note left him as cold as his usual guests. He stuffed it into his pocket, and flatly refused to show me over his territory.

“I’m too busy to-day,” he said. “I haven’t got any help, you know.”

As he spoke, he tugged petulantly at the handle of one of the cupboards. The steel door opened. A long tray slid out on to the barrow which Martin had brought with him. I was rooted to the ground by a shock worse than the one I had received at the abattoir. The tray held the body of a woman.

Martin left it in the middle of the room. He wheeled another barrow out of a corner, and manipulated another cupboard. Meanwhile, in a hoarse voice, he shouted:

“Here, Glenn!”

A brief and painful interval followed. Standing stock still, I forced myself to look calmly at that rigid body lying stretched under a merciless light.

She had died young; and she had been pretty. A sheet half covered her, in hard folds, such as you see on a statue. Her head emerged from it, untouched. Her sleeping face was emaciated, but endowed with a most moving serenity. Her bare feet stuck out from the other end of the sheet, contracted and yellow like a piece of primitive Italian sculpture. One of her shoulders had already been dissected by the student for whom Martin was preserving this fine anatomical specimen.

“Look, since you’re still here,” said Martin suddenly, “you might roll her to the operating-table for me.”

I jumped. Was he talking to me? I looked up, and saw that now ***there were two of us staring at the body***.

Martin was a White. White, too, was the dead girl, even though of such humble station that she now served as material for dissection. But Glenn, who had come up without my hearing him, was ***a Coloured man***.

How was his presence in this mortuary to be explained? He was not wearing an overall, but a black tunic with big buttons. Arsène told me afterwards that he was not a member of the staff of the great hospital, which would never have employed him for such an office on account of his colour. He was probably a tout for a firm of undertakers, whose propaganda is even more insidious in the United States than it is among us. He prowled around this place of death in the hope of picking up customers among relatives who came to fetch a body. When Martin was exceptionally busy, he did odd jobs for him; and Martin, of course, saw no harm in it.

Such is my belief, though I cannot guarantee that it is correct. In any case, neither anybody nor anything was to blame. For that matter, Glenn’s own attitude was extremely respectful. Only my own extreme sensibility on the subject made the feeling of race enter into the matter.

Standing beside the barrow opposite me, Glenn was staring at the dead girl. He was devouring her with his eyes. His big hands, hanging at his sides, were trembling slightly. He was panting a little. Was it because he was in a hurry to do what Martin told him? Or was it from his intense emotion as he felt a curiosity, so strong as to amount to an obsession, satisfied by this simple, but unusual sight?

Martin went on ahead with the other body which he had extracted from the refrigerator: an elderly man, horribly obese under his sheet. Then Glenn emerged from his ecstasy. He walked round the barrow. He bent over that bare shoulder, striped with a long streak of congealed blood, as though he were sniffing it. He picked up the handles, never taking his eyes, with their extraordinary stare, off that inert physical form. Then, expertly, softly, silently, he in turn took her away to the dissecting table.

I knew that this was just what Arsène had wanted me to see.

I might have followed Martin’s obliging acolyte, who was as gentle with the guests of the mortuary as its official guardian seemed rough. I might have questioned him, by way of understanding better that enigmatic expression of his.

But my courage was exhausted. I was shivering with the cold in that ice-box; and I had a feeling of nausea such as I have never experienced at sea.

I hurried up to the daylight, brushing past a group of people in mourning at the entrance to the corridor—customers for Glenn, I imagined.

All day long the dreadful taint of corruption clung to everything I ate, to the very air I breathed.

Nevertheless, I felt ashamed of carrying away from "the largest mortuary in the world" a memory so trivial, so peculiar: a memory perhaps vitiated by my own mind. It seemed so out of proportion, so derisory—and so debatable!

Arsène, it is true, had noticed before me Glenn's strange behaviour. But we might both have let ourselves be misled, and the coincidence might be quite fortuitous.

I went on thinking over this experience in the train which was taking me from Chicago to Washington. I made up my mind not to make too much of that too fleeting vision of mine, all the more embarrassing from its setting. It was no more significant than my impression at the abattoir.

And yet . . . whatever may have been the thoughts—or the instincts—of this Coloured man Glenn, I had unquestionably surprised him in an attitude of romantic worship at the shrine of White beauty. His unforgettable ecstasy conveyed more to me than weeks of study of the "sons of Ham"—the most musical people in the world, and the most sensual.

In that Shakespearian scene it was not a Black Hamlet who had appeared before me, but rather a modern incarnation of Goethe's hero: a Negro Werther. I could not help recalling how that grotesque but prophetic Mrs. Tupin, in the restaurant-car of another express, had demanded for her White sisters the love of a non-equal, an under-dog, a slave: all the "romance" so incompatible with the stodginess of business men!

How Mrs. Tupin would have sentimentalised over Glenn! Doubtless she would have appointed him to come and adore the members of her league.

But all that Black undertaker's tout may have been dreaming about, in the presence of dead White women, I did not realise until I listened in Washington to Colonel Lansdale—also a fanatic in his own way— telling me about a trial of Negro fetishists.

CHAPTER VII

FETISHISM IN VIRGINIA?

EARLY in a cool, grey morning, the "Liberty Limited" brought me to the Federal heart of the United States.

The Capitol, at my first sight of it from just outside the monumental station, struck me, with its colourless dome and its long peristyles, as rather like a Pantheon perched on top of a brand-new Louvre: majestic, but somewhat heavy.

As I made my way down to the Potomac, in the midst of a fine avenue, not unlike the Champs Élysées in Paris, I received rather a shock. There stood two factory chimneys, as ugly as they always are. But, from the top of the gigantic Obelisk, which I ascended as every good tourist should, I realised that the whole of the young official city was still under construction, or rather in course of reconstruction. Those factory chimneys represented a vestige, doubtless doomed, of the "utilitarian age."

In all directions, huge scaffoldings were giving birth to buildings, of the same type as the Quai d'Orsay, which were obviously government offices. Beyond lay a pleasant stretch of residential districts, embowered in verdure and with no skyscrapers frowning down upon them.

I felt more than ever attracted towards this country, which had forged its creative machinery before it went in for building palaces, and I paid homage to the present-day American aristocracy.

It was now late enough to call on people. I visited the White House, where, since I am no Babbitt, it did not occur to me to ask for a handshake from the President. Then, not far away, in another of those avenues planted with trees, whose dignified but rather massive residences reminded me of Berlin-Charlottenburg, I sent a letter of introduction from a friend of his to Colonel H. K. Lansdale.[1]

After a short wait, I was received in a severe library by a haughty host, with white hair brushed straight back: rather reminiscent of Bismarck. His "Well, what can I do for you?" conveyed to me perfectly that, while he was courtesy itself, he had no time to waste on journalists.

I did my best to ingratiate myself with him.

"Well, Colonel," said I, "your opinion is a valuable one, and I should be glad to know what you think about these cases of racial conflict which are nowadays so frequent and so formidable."

"You must excuse me," said he. "All that has ceased to concern me. I've retired. It's a matter for my successors, my juniors. In any case, I have nothing to say for publication. My name really ought not to be invoked any more."

"I'm sorry," I murmured. "Our mutual friend thought that my inquiry into the new relations between White women and Coloured men would interest you."

" Eh?" exclaimed Colonel Lansdale. "***What*** new relations?"

"For example, fifty years ago a good-class Chinese would never marry anybody but a Chinese girl . . ."

"And whom would he marry now? Not an American girl, eh?"

"More likely a Russian girl from Siberia," I replied, quite calmly.

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[1] I keep the real name of Colonel Lansdale to myself, like those of all the private persons to whom I refer in this book. I beg American citizens who may really be called by these names not to take offence because I have happened thus to baptise the persons here concerned.

“A White girl? And would ***she*** marry a Yellow man? Where have you ever come across anything like that?”

“In Pekin, in Shanghai, in Canton, all up the Yang-tze.”

The colonel sat down. I had managed to warm him up about the question which, whatever he might say to the contrary, still lay very near his heart. He proceeded to cross-examine me as though I were in the dock, as though I were his prisoner. I ended by fearing that the good friends who were expecting me for lunch would curse me. Tactfully, I summed up my little discoveries in Asia, in the States, and even at the Chicago mortuary. Meanwhile I witnessed a spectacle which was itself instructive.

It was the inborn, fundamental revolt of a man belonging to that Nordic fraction of the White tribes who feel the most horrified of all at the mere idea of cross-breeding, or even at the very thought of a dark body and a fair body embracing. The colonel, like my friend in Hawaii, was incapable of thinking without revulsion about admixture, about inter-marriage, about ***any form of love involving two colours***.

In his case, this was not hypocrisy, or lack of humanity and intelligence. It was a physical aversion, imposed by the senses themselves on the mind of this upright, sincere soldier. The colonel had certainly never felt any attraction towards any woman who was not, by unblemished descent, an authentic White woman. Doubtless he could scent the Negress beneath the white-lead complexion, the platinum-blonde hair, of those descendants of octoroon women who make Swedish women addicted to sport look positively dark. If his daughter had confessed to him that she was in love with a handsome mulatto, he would have turned his revolver on her, just as he would on an officer guilty of treachery.

“Let me assure you, sir,” he declared, when I judged him well hooked and left the conversation to him, “that I am no enemy of the Coloured races, Yellow, Black or anything else.”

“I’m sure you’re not, Colonel.”

“But to let them threaten the peace, the honour, ***the very existence*** of White women would be worse than denying our country; for an expatriated race perpetuates itself thanks only to filiation, thanks to its women. Look at the Jews . . .”

“You’re quite right.”

“Well, in the first place, we Americans feel that the idea of our racial heritage is even more sacred than our native land itself, since our ancestors came from Europe.”

“Quite so.”

Colonel Lansdale started walking up and down his library, with his hands behind his back, ponderously, thoughtfully.

“Besides, can you or I measure the gravity of the . . . the love-act?” he murmured, like a true Puritan. “Is it not written: ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’?”

“To be sure . . .”

“Do you know that, if a White woman once has a child by a Black man—since God allows such things to happen—and afterwards she conceives with even the purest White man, ***she may go on giving birth to half-breeds***? Aye, she may do so, even after years without any further association with a Black man. During her first gestation, the blood of the half-Negro foetus becomes mingled with her own blood, and she ceases to be an absolutely White woman. . . . And do physiologists yet know how far this phenomenon of ***impregnation*** extends? And what about the soul?”

“If it comes to that,” I ventured to suggest, “who can claim to be as White as snow?”

But he shrugged his shoulders without a smile.

"We must see that we defend ourselves, that's all," he said simply. "The more so because I repeat that the Coloured threat, whether it is actually sexual or not, always involves ***the danger of death*** for the White woman concerned, if the Coloured man is a Negro. If he belongs to certain oceanic races, who also practise human sacrifice in accordance with their fetishist religion, the danger of being killed, ***of being ritually put to death***, similarly hangs over the chosen woman. . . . In addition to the danger of abduction, imprisonment, violation and other ill-treatment. . . . In any case, such is the risk which is inevitably run by a White woman desired by a Black man. For he is no longer the slave of the Whites; but he remains ***the slave of his own fetish***, or of the medicine-man's god in whom he believes."

I was astounded.

"Nowadays, do you mean?" I asked. "Here in the United States?"

"Everywhere where the Blacks are Blacks. . . . Our Americans in the Old South are well aware of the fact: they know the Negroes! Hence their strictness in cases such as that of Scottsboro. The American Black has remained ***an African***, haunted by the horrors of the jungle which led his ancestors to invent protective amulets. . . . Such is the source of the fetishes which you find solely in the United States, on our free Black citizens . . . or, often, on the light-complexioned mulattoes, apparently highly civilised . . . or, sometimes, even on credulous Whites, who have succumbed to such superstitions too."

The colonel opened a glass case. He let me handle some singular odds and ends, all labelled; teeth, bits of bone, stones, chop-sticks, shells, rag-dolls.

"Yes," he went on, with pitying contempt, "a certain number of Whites succumb to things like these. The splendid faith of our fathers is not good enough for everybody—just imagine it!—in these degenerate, atheistic days of ours. So these idiots, instead of worshipping the miraculous as we know it, go and look for it among savages. Have you any idea how many definitely fetishist sects flourish in this highly progressive country of mine ? You can count them by the dozen! In Chicago—you've been there, haven't you?—in that city of industry and study, just imagine that there exists, amid others no less odd, a secret society for the celebration of the ritual of Black magic, as it exists in the Sudan, the Congo, and Guinea: ***a secret society of Whites*** organised in lodges—though without any connection with either your European Freemasons or ours."

"A mystical reaction against a life too lacking in idealism, too crushed by the dollar," I commented. "But let's get back to the Blacks and White women, Colonel. I don't want to incriminate that poor devil whom I saw staring at a woman's corpse . . . but you've hinted that certain fetishes may be taken from the human body. These teeth I see in your collection, these locks of fair hair—they're feminine remains, are they?"

"For preference."

"What exactly is a fetish?"

"An object which, according to the Negro superstition, is the seat of a force capable of acting in a demoniac way. The material fetish is, so to speak, the vehicle provided for this spirit, a kind of home for it, for which the spirit more or less pays rent in the form of services which it renders to the owner of the object."

"And the role of the woman in all this?"

"Everything which is ***sacrificed*** to the spirits of African demonology must be feminine: female birds and animals, female children, grownup girls."[1]

"I thought that the he-goat figured on the Voodoo altar," I ventured.

"No, it's the she-goat that is sacrificed . . . or the ***kidling without horns***: a woman. Once the fetish is inhabited by a demon, it demands precisely such sacrifices, lest it should lose its tenant and therefore its power. This is the true explanation of many crimes which have remained mysteries, because theft or any other ordinary motive seemed to be excluded. The suspected or convicted culprit was a Negro, and the victim was a White woman. The crime was a propitiatory sacrifice made to the fetish."

"Have you come across many such cases in the course of your career?" I asked.

The colonel had come to a stop. He hesitated before he replied.

"Any number," he said at length, in a rather breathless tone of voice. "Or, at least, I regarded them as such, though people didn't always believe me. The list would be still longer if one included in it acts of reprisals and revenge of which men may afterwards be the object: especially representatives of public order, such as police officers and judges. . . ."

I reflected that, in the course of his connection with the police, the colonel must have run some remarkable risks. How could I tell whether, at this very moment, this champion of race purity might not have some reason for fear—for even the bravest know what fear means —as he felt the presence around him of still smouldering resentment against him?

"I am no longer surprised that you do not desire your name to be mentioned," I told him.

He thanked me for my spontaneous promise. Then he sat down again.

"Enough of generalities," he said. "I'll quote you a quite recent case of murder. On January 13 last, at Centerburgh, a small town in the State of Virginia, two White women were found murdered."

"Was that the Bodsley case?" I murmured.

"So you've heard something about it, eh? In fact, it attracted a good deal of attention, because it was so mysterious. . . . Mrs. Joan Middling Bodsley was a widow of forty, an attractive woman, wealthy and well-born. Her husband, a banker, had died of pneumonia in 1930. Since then she had lived a retired, irreproachable life with her younger brother, Paul Middling. They lived close together, but each in their own villa, in that charming small town of Centerburgh.

"It's a fashionable resort, famous for its fox-hunting in accordance with the old English tradition. There are as many as twenty-two large landowners there, who keep packs of hounds with their huntsmen. These huntsmen are mostly Blacks; for Virginia belongs to what we call the South."

"Did Mrs. Bodsley go in for hunting too?"

"She was to ride to hounds that very morning of January 13. Her brother went along, in the ordinary way, to pick her up at breakfast-time. He found the villa silent; the door open, with one of its panes of glass broken; and his sister lying in her pyjamas in her bedroom, dead, with her head so battered in that there was a pool of blood all round her.

"A servant aged sixty, Mrs. Heckner, who slept in the next room to her mistress, had also been murdered in her bed, in the same way, but even more ferociously. Middling fetched help. An investigation was opened on the spot, under the direction of

[1] Several learned Haitians have since told me that this is incorrect so far as the Voodoo religion in their island is concerned. I leave the discussion to specialists.

Attorney Gallivat and with the help of the local master of hounds, among whom was Brigadier General Knightshell, formerly head of our military aviation.

"It appeared at once that theft could not have been the primary motive for the crime, for Mrs. Bodsley still had her rings on her fingers. Nothing had been taken from the house, but the car was missing from its garage.

"Mrs. Bodsley had returned home in it about midnight, driving it herself, after attending an anti-prohibition meeting at the village of Aboveville. But don't jump to the conclusion that she wasn't perfectly sober."

"I wasn't thinking of it, Colonel."

"It was assumed that the murderer had taken the car to make good his escape. In fact, the police found it abandoned right here in Washington, near the Highway Bridge. So the murderer's motive wasn't stealing the car. Later, Mrs. Heckner's relatives declared that she had kept her savings in her bedroom, and that they had disappeared; but this wasn't established. Finally, the autopsy showed that neither of the victims had been outraged."

"So that wasn't the motive either?"

"There was no reason to suppose so. Mrs. Bodsley's family and friends said that, so far as they knew, she had no enemies, or anything on her mind which would give a pointer for the investigation. The Virginia police had the assistance of some 'aces' of our criminal police: Murphy of the Homicide Squad; Sandberg, the finger-print expert; Fowler, the ballistics expert. First-class blood-hounds, take my word for it. They identified the instrument which had inflicted those savage wounds: a shoe-horn. That was as far as the investigation had gone, when an essential witness arrived spontaneously from Washington.

"He was Mr. Nathaniel Molder, head of the Raft Agency, which supplies private detectives. The day before the tragedy Mrs. Bodley had called at his office. Let me remind you that Centerburgh isn't very far from Washington. She told Mr. Molder that she was in urgent need of protection because she was afraid of being attacked in her home by a Black named George Ryegrass.

"She had employed this man as a jobbing gardener, despite his bad reputation. He had just served a prison sentence for theft aggravated by violence. On December 24 the Coloured man had absconded, taking with him, so Mrs. Bodsley said, five hundred dollars' worth of underwear and other articles of value. On December 28 she laid information against him. Since then, she apparently had reason to fear revenge."

"So it was all cleared up once it became known that a Negro was involved?"

"No, the mystery persisted. It is true that henceforth everything tended to confirm Ryegrass's guilt. To begin with, Dr. Shoddy, our famous legal doctor, found under the dead woman's nails fragments torn from a brown skin, the colour of copper: the very colour of Ryegrass's skin, as it was described in the particulars about him at the prison where he had served his sentence. Next, in the car, a piece of paper was found, with a note scribbled in his handwriting. Finally, he must have read the newspapers; but he didn't surrender to the police. He hasn't been caught yet; but they're on his track."

"Well, Colonel, apparently the murderer was already a thief. What leads you to regard the case as an example of Negro fetishism?

"Why did not Mrs. Bodsley take her brother and her friends into her confidence, instead of seeking protection from private detectives? Why did she not also address herself to the State police, to whom she had already given information about the theft? Her proceedings suggest that, after a violent reaction against George Ryegrass's dis-

honesty, she regretted the publicity which she herself had thus given to their relations."

"You mean that she didn't look upon him just as a gardener?"

"She may very well have taken an interest in him otherwise— but ***an interest quite outside the sphere of sex***. This widow, whom her mourning had left alone and melancholy, may have looked upon him at first simply as a fortune-teller, or perhaps as a raiser of spirits from the dead. Then she may have become involved, through his initiation, in one of the secret societies of other Negroes, which are all linked with the great African religious society, the Ogboni, rebaptised the Obeah by our Blacks. An entirely innocent curiosity on her part, justified by the fact that she was bored, may have made her the designated victim for one of those sacrifices to fetishes of which we possess plenty of other proofs."

"So, despite her fox-hunting, this White woman was ***bored***!" I remarked. "But has it been established that Ryegrass himself belonged to one of the secret societies in question?"

"Being a Coloured man, he must have belonged to one of them," replied Colonel Lansdale, with the utmost conviction. "With very rare exceptions, ***all of them do***, I tell you. . . . If I were in charge of the investigation, what I should try to prove is his religious grade, his capacity as a fetishist priest, an Oba or Obi . . ."

"***Obi***," I repeated. "I've come across that word before, Colonel, in ***Bug-Jargal***, a curious novel by our Victor Hugo. 'Tremble, O White daughter of Hispaniola! . . . You are White, and I am Black. . . . But day needs to unite with night, to give birth to dawn and dusk, which are more beautiful than day. . . .' And what about your private information? Does it show that the fugitive Ryegrass is an Obi?"

The colonel brusquely waved away any suggestion that he wanted to substitute himself for the official investigators.

"The Grand Jury brought in a true bill of murder against Ryegrass," he said. "Up to the present, it's all pure hypothesis. When they lay hands on the man, nobody will be able to say with absolute certainty: 'You killed Mrs. Bodsley because such-and-such an interest impelled you to do so.' In fact, obedience to a fetish wouldn't strike many American attorneys as an adequate motive."

Colonel Lansdale's sarcasm gave me a glimpse of the struggles which he must have had to wage—like all doctrinaires—against other criminologists who were opposed to his theory.

"Ryegrass would be wiser to surrender to the police," he wound up. "His advocate could plead how illogical was the accusation, since there was no obvious motive for the crime according to ***our*** ideas. That would upset a good many jurists. . . ."

Colonel Lansdale's prediction, I may mention here, in parenthesis, proved well-founded. To round off the Bodsley case—about which the colonel doubtless did not give me all the information at his disposal—let me say that Ryegrass was finally run to earth in Boston. But there Federal Judge James A. Causey, an old magistrate worthy of our legendary Jacobins, decided that the charge was ill-founded, and refused to hand the Negro over to the jurisdiction of the State of Virginia.

There followed a great outburst of wrath among the Southerners. Their senators brought pressure to bear on the Washington Cabinet to secure the dismissal of this judge who refused to accept their point of view. Once more, as in the Massie case, as in the Scottsboro case, the burning question of race perturbed America.

Was it Colonel Lansdale who took the right view of this case, with its background of superstition and terror? Or was my host, like those alienists who impute everything

to madness, calumniating the poor Black people, whom other witnesses describe as so inoffensive?

The colonel locked up his fetish-case, and I noticed that he was careful to put the key into his pocket.

"The way these Negroes' minds work!" he murmured. "The way they turn aggressive or go mad, all at once! The way they plot, the way they conspire, living around us, among us, in our own homes! . . . What an enigma they are—and what a gulf there is between us and them! Yet some people propose to treat them as though they were Whites, as though they were our equals—when their blood, their whole heredity, would always produce skins as dark as ever, even if they were acclimatised in the North for centuries. No, they are ***a different species of mankind***; and much further away from us than the Yellows, let me tell you . . . much more ***mysterious***."

Some of these remarks of the colonel's had struck me as excessive, if not shocking; but all my impressions as a traveller combined to make me admit that his last remark was quite right.

"The Black man is more mysterious than the Yellow, you say?" I repeated. "He certainly is, Colonel. I think just the same thing myself, even though there is an almost universal prejudice to the contrary."

"There's no doubt about it," said he. "You've met the Chinese in China. I've met plenty of them in America, in San Francisco and elsewhere. Their way of reasoning, their way of behaving, which are so often regarded as incomprehensible, have always struck me as quite comprehensible, in accordance with a tradition of culture, a code of customs, which may be different from ours, but are ***equally logical***, equally deductive, established and codified."

I found myself entirely in agreement with Colonel Lansdale.

"Take the Negro, on the other hand," my host went on. "In any given situation, how will he behave? We cannot ***calculate*** his behaviour. It is a function of factors which we cannot estimate. . . . He's worse than a skittish horse, whose shying for no obvious reason cannot be foreseen by the best rider in the world—and it may break his neck!"

Despite the intense interest which I took in this discussion, I had stood up. Time waits for no man, and I had to be going.

"One of the great mysteries, ***perhaps the greatest mystery of our time***, is involved in all this," Colonel Lansdale continued, as he escorted me to the hall. "It is of capital importance for the United States; and, for that matter, for your France and the other White nations. For the Yellow races, even if they are becoming hostile to us, live apart from us. Their migration has been stopped in time. They must invade us first, if they are to do us any harm. On the other hand, the Black race has already installed itself in our midst."

"The French," I replied, "look forward to turning this into a blessing, not a nuisance."

"But can you?" inquired the colonel bitterly. "These Negroes have got hold of us by their inanimate idols and their cheerful paganism, by their music, by their very wretchedness, by all the childish sentimentalities with which women bemuse themselves."

"Woman again?" said I, almost sorry to rediscover in the colonel the same kind of jealousy which I had already suspected in so many other Whites.

"Yes, it's woman whom their mystery most attracts. And also an element stranger still: the spontaneity of the Black towards her."

"What do you mean?"

"Now that he no longer feels enslaved, the Black is becoming infinitely more at ease with our women, infinitely better able to confide in them, than are the men of our race. The reason is ***the absence in him of the Biblical theme implanted in us***. He has not been taught to distrust Eve—Adam's downfall; and he looks upon her as a creature morally similar to himself."

"Perhaps he's right. . . ."

"He's wrong, both about himself and about her," my Puritan host corrected me sternly. "The symbol of the Garden of Eden has not lost its meaning. According to the Book, the problem remains the same eternally: shall Eve, or shall she not, trample the serpent underfoot?"

"Yes, that's the whole question," I agreed, as gravely as I could.

"***The serpent***: the essential emblem of Negro magic!" Colonel Lansdale emphasised, as we reached the coat-rack where his valet was awaiting us.

This servant of his was, of course, a White. He looked about the same age as the colonel, and carried himself much in the same way. I imagined he had been the colonel's faithful orderly for years past.

"Well, Yard," asked the colonel, lowering his voice a little, as the valet helped me on with my coat, "have you seen any more of that Nigger who you said was prowling around here?"

"No, sir, nothing at all," replied Yard, eyeing me askance.

"You must have been dreaming, my dear fellow."

I held out my hand to the colonel. He kept it captive.

"Just imagine," he said, "just imagine that our grandfathers fought to free these confounded Blacks. . . . I'm a son of the North myself. My family used to be on one of the routes of the 'Underground Road.' Do you know what that was? Oh, it's a fine story. Whenever a slave escaped from his master in the South, he tried to reach our Northern States. Every house gave him shelter, one after the other, and provided him with means to get further north. That's what we did out of sheer humanity, in accordance with God's law. But nowadays we really don't know whether the South wasn't right. There was once an intelligent Negro called Marcus Garvey. Unfortunately, he lost his popularity with the Blacks, left America, and settled in London, I believe. But, before that, he wanted to take the whole lot of them back to Africa. It's a pity he didn't manage to do it."

Such was the pessimistic conclusion which I carried away from my visit to Colonel Lansdale. But it was in the opposite camp that I wanted to hear the last word in this fundamental debate about the American Blacks.

My opportunity soon presented itself in New York's famous Negro district, Harlem. Here, White though I might be, I was admitted to a very secret assembly.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE MYSTERIES IN HARLEM

IT was pure chance which took me back that afternoon to my hotel in the centre of New York. I wanted to get rid of some parcels. I was crossing the vast entrance-hall, when the reception clerk called me over to his desk. He handed me a letter, and added in a contemptuous tone of voice, which surprised me:

"Somebody's waiting for you ***behind*** the main lounge."

The letter had been sent from California by Rodney, that "darkey," to all appearance quite White, whom I had met on board the liner on my way to the United States. He wrote:

"My father, who you may remember is a militant supporter of 'African Americanism,' is to speak at a Negro meeting in Harlem. If this meeting interests you, the bearer of this message will see that you are admitted to it."

I hastened towards the less conspicuous part of the lounge where the reception-clerk had told me to look. A very elegant mulatto stood up to meet me.

He was much better dressed than I was, perfectly presentable and indeed haughty, almost arrogant, as people always on the look out for insult usually are. But his light yellow skin, vainly powdered with rose, undeniably betrayed his heritage of Negro blood. So, even though New York is, among all American cities, the least susceptible on the subject of race, he had preferred to take his seat apart.

"Of course," he told me, "no non-Coloured American is ever admitted to our club. For its character is definitely political, and its meetings are secret. But your recommendation by the son of our speaker leads us to make an exception in your favour. So does the fact that you are French. I know Paris and France myself; and I appreciate that, apart from colonial questions, you treat Negroes fairly."

"We treat them no less fairly in our colonies," I replied. "If you go there, you'll find that out for yourself."

In this fine fellow, somewhere in his thirties, I found all the pride, the touchiness, the prejudice with which his racial brethren respond to the way in which the Whites look down on them. Indeed, he exaggerated all these attributes.

However, he did not argue about my correction over our colonies.

"Where and when does your meeting take place?" I asked.

"In a night club, where we have supper after our work. Our own club—I'm one of its officials, but I may tell you it has no legal existence—is made up of musicians, dancers and other artists in the Harlem cabarets."

"So that's the kind of audience to whom Rodney's father is going to expound his doctrine? Yes, I shall be extremely interested."

"There's going to be a lot of opposition at the meeting," remarked the young president of the club—I shall call him Mr. Joshua—still on the defensive. "We're all very busy until long after midnight, so the meeting will be very late—or rather very early."

"That just suits me," I replied. "At any other time, I should find it hard to meet you without setting my friends wondering."

The life I was leading in New York, thanks to my friends there, was indeed so full that no room seemed to be left in it for anything clandestine or mysterious. Despite the unearthly hour of the "African-American" meeting, I had to feign a blinding headache in order to escape back to my hotel alone.

My hotel-porter, observing my manoeuvre, congratulated me cordially as he hailed another taxi.

"You're making the best of New York, sir. You don't waste much time in bed."

I laughed, and simply said to the chauffeur:

"Harlem!"

"But Harlem's all closed up by now," persisted my friend the porter; " 'Connie's,' and 'Sugar,' and 'Cotton' . . . there's nothing left open now but . . ."

He named the very place where I was going. I didn't blink an eye, and the taxi drove away fast through the deserted streets.

My hotel-porter was no thought-reader. He could not have had any idea why I was going where I was. Any well-informed Parisian hotel-porter would similarly have told a foreigner that the last Negro cabaret in Montmartre to fold its table-cloths is Mitchell's, because that is where those who have entertained their clients all night sit down to supper in their turn.

When I arrived, the first-floor room was filled entirely with Coloured people. Before omelettes and cold cuts sat some of the worthy "coons" who make a living—and none too good a one since the crisis—by playing for White men and women to dance.

On their knees or hung on the backs of their chairs shone their sources of livelihood: silver clarionets, gilded trombones. Many of them wore their napkins tied round their necks, like children—which made their big black faces look as though their heads were cut off—for fear of splashing their fine professional " boiled shirts." There were also some pretty mulatto girls, not only "attractions" at the night clubs, but also, no doubt, some clandestine prostitutes from 136th Street, who had come to meet their banjoist lovers after politely turning the last Americans, secret fanciers of brown flesh, out of their comfortable "buffet flats."

I was welcomed without much enthusiasm. I could hear Southern Blacks repeating: "Hist—a White!" Then I caught sight of Mr. Joshua, solemn, but smiling, behind the customers, beckoning me to the head of the winding staircase which led to the ground-floor and the basement. We went downstairs.

Down below was another room, just as big but lower, arranged for the meeting, with rows of seats in front of a platform. They were already half-full, and after my arrival the audience rapidly swelled. By the time the meeting opened the room was packed.

"We should like you to sit on the platform," Joshua said to me.

I protested. This was a definitely political meeting, and, not being an American, I wanted to preserve absolute neutrality.

"Doubtless you are dissatisfied with certain laws of this country—your own country," I pointed out. "For my part, I must respect these laws, just as much as your right to criticise them. I confine myself to the role of an onlooker."

Rodney's father, to whom I had just been introduced, agreed that I was right. I sat down at the end of the front row. Behind me I could sense the stir, the heat, the smell of musk of the audience, and I was also in a good position to appreciate their reaction, whether jesting or angry. Joshua detailed one of his lieutenants to whisper a translation of any incomprehensible slang to me.

Compared with this one, all my earlier experiences of the American Black race really amounted to nothing. I might, indeed, while I was in New York, meet Negroes of a very different stamp, cultured men like McKay or Du Bois; or, on the other hand, some much less sophisticated, among the working-class who did not make a living by providing excitation for revellers. But, in fact, it was here that I was to acquire my

most intense impression of the war covertly waged by these freed slaves against the Whites.

Those Negroes of Harlem, Levites of that Negro religion, dancing, confronted the enemy in daily skirmishes. Yet they were forced to seek reconciliation and peace all the time, since they made their living directly out of Whites.

There were no women present: they had all stayed upstairs. Among those athletic young men the nervous tension of jazz persisted. I could hear the creaking of their polished shoes as they still kept time to the obsessing rhythm of some "snake-dance." One of them, a tap-dancer, still had his clappers in his hands. When the meeting became tumultuous he punctuated interruptions with them frantically. The start of it, however, was academic enough. The father of my "White" friend Rodney was almost as dark as any West African; but his frizzy hair was turning grey. This short, thick-set, spectacled man reincarnated the physiognomy of President Thiers, tanned by too long a stay in Gambia.

Mr. Joshua took his place in front of the presidential arm-chair. He reminded his followers that the speaker did not belong to their club, but to a certain "National Committee for the Promotion of African-Americanism." He had come here to put the preliminary conclusions of this committee before this secret meeting of the night workers of Harlem. The president requested the audience to listen to him with deference, and to postpone any objection until the subsequent discussion.

"My brethren," this dark pseudo-Thiers proclaimed in substance, "our people, exiled from Africa, have long wondered where their destiny lies. I am an old man now. When I was your age the wisest heads in our ranks were attracted by the idea of a return to our former fatherland, the continent whence the Blacks came. That was the time of Marcus Garvey, whom we believed to be the Black deliverer, our liberator, our pacific Bolivar." The audience promptly transgressed the president's request that they should keep quiet. The name of Garvey seemed on the whole unpopular amid these young men. Despite the cymbal-clashes with which Joshua replaced the usual chairman's bell, fiery exclamations poured forth. My interpreter paraphrased some of them for me.

"England was afraid of Garvey!" shouted a stout, very black fellow, looking as though he came from Dahomey, who was sitting in the middle of the row. "She came to an understanding with the States to ruin him and imprison him. And you elders of ours didn't back him up. If you had, his work would never have collapsed."

"Garvey was nothing but a business man," vociferated an interrupter of the opposite opinion. "He ran his ships and his papers on the savings of simple-minded Niggers. The Whites encouraged him to ship us all off to Utopia. But would any of you old committee-men ever really have embarked for Liberia? You kept on saying: 'Back to the land of our ancestors!' But you didn't want to go there, any more than the Jews want to go back to the Promised Land. And quite right, too! We've got used to civilisation in America, and Africa strikes us as a bit too savage."

Little "Monsieur Thiers" polished his glasses majestically. He was not making his speech for the first time; and he was familiar with its incendiary results among his flock.

"There we are dealing with the past," he went on, when the tumult had subsided. "Whatever you may have heard about Garvey, let me tell you that I knew him; and he was a man! But he could not fulfil his hopes. To-day, we must all unite in a different determination: ***to stay for ever in America***, where generations of Blacks have participated, by their work and by their blood, in building up present-day civilisation."

This time he was unanimously applauded.

"Yes," shouted the man from Dahomey again—he struck me as personifying spitfire, senseless contradiction—"yes, the Yanks have transformed their land, thanks to the efforts of our grandfathers under the taskmaster's lash. And then they sent us to Europe as targets for the Germans' shells. And now they still want to refuse us equality with them here, do they?"

"Patience!" said "Monsieur Thiers" whole-heartedly. "Comrades, by union you will triumph. Fourteen million citizens cannot fail to win justice and respect, once they know what they want."

" Of cohse, gotta know that first," yelped a copper-coloured youth in a check suit, amid all the dinner-jackets.

"We do know it," asserted the speaker. "The right path for us has been pointed out by the Americans themselves. They treat us ***as Blacks***, even if our descent shows repeated relationship with their own race, and even if our complexions are in fact lighter than theirs. Well, they are right. ***We are all Blacks***, at least at heart; and we ought to be proud of the fact."

Only half the audience applauded this affirmation.

"Cannot we boast an ancestry much higher than that of all these immigrant Whites spewed out of Europe?" went on "Monsieur Thiers," suddenly lyrical. "Our friend the great Black singer, Paul Robeson, 'the Emperor Jones,' maintains that the legends of Negrodom link us intellectually with the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and even the Trojans. How different from the barbarous Caucasus whence the Whites sprang! That is the way we must all turn: our own way. Let us not be ashamed of being Black! Let us attach no value to any physical or intellectual half-breeding we may possess! ***Let us not seek to make ourselves White in any way***!

"Then, little by little, we shall give definite shape to the idea of African-Americanism: a modern Negro race between the Atlantic and the Pacific. . . . As one of you has just suggested, we shall be in a position to demand restitution of those lands which have already been fertilised by Black flesh. We can carry out our true programme, for which every Darkey should henceforth sacrifice himself: ***autonomy for American States reserved for Blacks***, governed by ourselves, in which Whites will be only tolerated foreigners. What States? Those of the South, the scene of our martyrdom ever since 1610, and again since the first attempt at a negrocratic policy failed about 1878.

"Those States, Florida, Louisiana and Texas, whose climate is essentially tropical, will perhaps some day form the North of a vast Black America, with its centre in Haiti and the Caribbean islands, and a large southern sphere extending over Colombia, the Guianas, and Brazil. . . . By the time when that is accomplished, Black Africa, too, will no doubt have recovered its independence. Our sons will no longer be forced into the dilemma of having to abandon one fatherland to gain another. Two immense Negro empires will be paramount in those sunny latitudes where alone we can live happily."

President Joshua laid his hand quickly on the speaker's arm. I suppose he was thinking about me. He would have preferred that no reference should be made to Equatorial Africa, of which France possesses a large part, But "Monsieur Thiers," now that he was well under way, was not going to have his style cramped. For that matter, his audience seemed spellbound by the grandeur of the dream which he had suddenly evoked for them.

"A distant prospect, no doubt, my brethren," wound up the delegate of the Committee, whose mysterious character I was now beginning to understand better. "A dis-

tant prospect: but not so distant that, within our lifetimes, we may not see the sun rise over it. Indeed, our opportunity may prove to be nearer than we know."

"And how are you going to get the Whites of the South to make a present of their property to the Blacks, you fathead?" the fellow in the check suit shouted rudely.

The presidential cymbal clashed. "Monsieur Thiers," much offended, drew himself up to what height he had in readiness to reply. But at this point another partisan stood up.

"Yes," he declared, "we can do it; but only on condition that all the Coloured peoples keep in step all over the world. The Yellows can give us a hand. Japan will support our claims."

I had a clear feeling that this was a piece of interested instigation. This only too far-sighted enthusiast looked very much like what Americans call a "stool-pigeon " and we call an ***agent-provocateur***. Several of my neighbours, even if they did not share my own intuition, were up in arms against this dangerous suggestion.

"No mixing up the Yellows with the Blacks!" they shouted. "One of these days Japan is going to make war on America. Then, if we've anything to do with her, they'll call us traitors, and the National Guard will massacre us."

This time there was no stopping the storm.

"Well, some Blacks have already linked up with the Japanese," somebody shouted. "I was present at the reception of a Japanese propagandist at Detroit. He offered to sell us arms."

"Of course he did," shouted somebody else. "Japan's always out for business."

"Let me tell you that the Japanese are better friends of ours than the Chinese."

"It's fellows like you who hold up the march of our race."

"When I look at you, you dumb-bell, I realise why people accuse us of being descended from chimpanzees."

On the platform, "Monsieur Thiers" brandished his little grey hands as high as he could out of his white cuffs.

"My friends," he cried, "let us go back to the beginning of my argument. Clear your minds of cant! Try to learn the discipline of debate!"

By this time everybody was standing up. They were all gabbling together and wrangling with one another, possessed by that frenzy for eloquence which is, indeed, the saddest of the Negro's borrowings from the White.

Being less used to it than Rodney's father or Joshua the chairman, I expected to see this squabble degenerate into a brawl. But these worthy Blacks were, in fact, too fond of hearing themselves talk, and too shrewd, to proceed from words to blows.

All at once, the fellow in the check suit sprang not merely on to the platform, but actually on to the president's table, with a bound really like a monkey's. Without even stopping to straighten himself up, he crouched there, with his long red-brick hands braced on his knees, and shouted at the disputants:

"You're nothing but a lot of animated nonentities!"

A burst of laughter and cat-calls followed the instant silence produced by this apostrophe. Gesticulating hilariously, the simian protester developed his point of view freely.

"You make me sick with all your humbug. Every one of us knows perfectly well that there's only one thing he wants: to be as much like the Whites as possible! Somebody mentioned Haiti. Well, they say that some Negro out there, as black as could be, managed to take all the colour out of his skin by swallowing some kind of seed. It pretty nearly killed him; but now he looks ***just like a White***. If somebody brought us a basketful of that seed right here, and guaranteed that it wouldn't kill us, is there one of

us who wouldn't take a dose of it on the spot? Come on, now, let's be frank with ourselves! That's the truth, isn't it?"

Almost the whole audience applauded him, laughing all the time. "Monsieur Thiers," much depressed, took refuge in a whispered conversation with sympathetic Joshua. The self-appointed speaker executed an elegant shuffle on the table, and then he went on, at the top of his voice:

"As for the Japanese, let's be on our guard against them. They're just as clever rogues as we are. If the Americans didn't close the frontiers against them, happily for us, our dance-halls would soon be turned into geisha-houses, and we should have nothing to do but go back to our plantations. As for looking forward to our segregation into purely Negro States, let anybody who likes go and preach that to the poor Blacks who grow cotton along the Mississippi. So far as we Harlem artists are concerned, we have everything to lose from anything so crazy. Our game is exactly the opposite. We ought to intermingle still more with the Whites, and invent irresistible amusements for them, so that they will come and spend their dollars among us, even at a time of crisis."

"Yeah! Yeah!" yelped the audience.

"And, while it may not be in our power to make ourselves White, let us lead the Whites, little by little, to ***admire the Blacks*** and believe in our artistic superiority. Already they're bewitched by our music and our dancing. That's our best way—in fact, our only way. And we all know that, in this direction, we shall find plenty of strong support among White ladies, even if they pretend to despise us in public. Isn't that so?" the impromptu orator wound up, in a highly suggestive falsetto.

Feet together, he jumped down from the platform. A frantic ovation was paid to him. Mr. Joshua waited for a few moments, and then called on the official speaker again. But Rodney ***père*** had no chance of winning back his audience, who behaved like schoolboys. He stammered a few commonplaces about the future: "You must pull yourselves together, my dear comrades, or you will be lost. . . ." Then Joshua hastened to declare the meeting at an end.

"Never mind," Rodney ***père*** said to me, by way of "saving his face." "I've given them something to think about. I'll talk to them again, and next time I'll convince them. . . ."

By the time I left that cellar, little by little the smell of the Blacks had turned into that of an African camp. But outside New York, as daylight came, was receiving its wonderful morning breeze, perfumed with ozone from the neighbouring Atlantic. Such is the advantage for a Babylon of being also a seaport.

The earliest elevated trains were rolling gaily over Harlem amid amber sunshine. When Joshua heard that I proposed to go back to my hotel in this radiant dawn on foot, he insisted on accompanying me as far as Central Park. He wanted to clarify my mind about what had happened at the meeting.

"You needn't worry," I told him. " Public meetings are really an old French invention, and we've given up taking their ups and downs too tragically. Still, let me question you a little more about that reference to White women, which won your outsider such applause. What is the truth about your relations with White women, now that they've accepted your cabarets as fashionable places, or even made them so?"

He pursed his thick lips as he replied, with a smile:

"In France, would a gentleman tell?"

"No, he wouldn't. But I'm not interested in personalities. What I want is just a general idea."

Joshua still hesitated.

"Well," he murmured at length," on the whole, the more White women see of us, the more they like us, or even become fond of us. But any . . . any signs of actually intimate relations with us are really very rare. That accursed prejudice against us still remains very strong. So there's plenty of shyness . . . among Black men quite as much as among White women."

I attacked from a different angle.

"And with the Yellows, those Japanese and Chinese whom people talked about at the meeting—do you think White women can get on as well with them as they do with you?"

He sneered, with a touch of pride.

"What, those Asiatic monkeys? If they want a White woman they've got to pay for her, and pay a lot, too."

I was rediscovering here the same situation as in Chicago and Shanghai.

"But," I objected, "what about all these stories one hears about New York's Chinatown in Lower Manhattan? People say that the Chinese have lured there not merely one White woman, but White women by the dozen, who are fascinated by them."

The mulatto shrugged his shoulders; but an odd expression came into his face.

"If you leave opium out of account," he murmured, "what can the Chinese do to attract an American woman?"

We walked on a few yards in silence. Then he added, as though despite himself:

"You find opium in Harlem, too. But, when it comes to real fascination, ***we have other secrets***, which the Yellows know nothing about."

His tone of voice had suddenly become almost menacing.

"What sort of secrets?" I asked, trying to hide my extreme curiosity.

Joshua replied, with an air of indifference:

"Well, in any case, all that is becoming lost. It was the old Negroes who preserved the tradition."

I exerted myself to convince him that I knew something about these mysteries.

"Of course, Mr. Joshua," said I, "the Yellows whom you meet here haven't received any such heritage from their grandparents, who were merely coolies in mercilessly materialist empires. In Asia, to find anything like the equivalent of the mysticism of Guinea and the Congo, you have to go to the depths of Mongolia and Tibet. There alone reign, to this very day, wizard-priests who frighten the ambassadors of republican Nanking. I am well aware that you Negroes have at your disposal equally powerful spells. . . ."

Pride made Joshua's frowning face relax. Finally he succumbed to the temptation to impress me. But he was still reticent at first. "Our enemies exaggerate things in order to make us hated," he said. "To my mind, that story of the Negro in Haiti who turned White is all nonsense. But there's no doubt that the Haitians and all the West Indian Blacks can go one better than that. Have you ever heard about what's called a ***zombi*** or ***guédé***?"

I confessed that I didn't know just what it meant, Joshua explained, triumphantly:

"Imagine a corpse brought to life again. Or, to put it better, a living human being whose will is asleep, so to speak, and who obeys his master blindly, just as though he were a machine."

"A hypnotised subject, in short?"

"Yes, but kept all the time in a state of the most absolute slavery."

"And you mean to say that such a phenomenon exists in the West Indies?"

Joshua pressed close to me, on that bright sidewalk in Lenox Avenue, thronged with Negroes and Negresses on their way to work.

"Listen to me," he said solemnly. "I'll tell you something that happened to me: something I saw with my own eyes."

"Go ahead, my dear Mr. Joshua."

"But it wasn't my doing, you must understand. Nor can I explain. . . ."

"All right, I won't hold you guilty."

"Well, I was very young. I hadn't much experience of women, or of life in general. I realised the danger of offending a White woman. That made me timid and awkward when I started dancing among them in night-clubs. I explained my feelings to a veteran colleague, who had retired. He had an apartment of his own in a lodging-house reserved for Blacks. This lodging-house occupied the upper floors of the building from which we've just come."

"Isn't it there any longer?"

"No. This is an old story. It happened years and years ago. . . . My elder listened to my confidences with gentle mockery. 'Come up to my room,' he said. 'And keep to yourself what you're going to see—or you won't live long!' I've never told anybody this story before, but I'm not betraying anybody now. In fact, the man concerned is dead. Well, we went upstairs. He opened the door of his sitting-room, then of his bedroom, and finally of a little lobby tucked away at the end of the apartment. It was in darkness, with the shutters closed and the curtains drawn. He switched on the electric light. I saw a bed, with a form lying in it and the bedclothes covering its head. It never stirred, though we were making some noise."

"What a sound sleep!"

"So I thought. My old friend pulled back the clothes. Believe it or not, but what I saw was a girl: unconscious, as though she were dead, but as fresh as though she had just died suddenly. And ***she was White***, from head to feet."

"I say!"

"The old Black started muttering oddly through his teeth, trembling as though he were concentrating all his energy. Lo and behold, the sleeper sat up, slid from the bed, and stood up, groping as though she were in darkness! At his orders, she started walking about the room. She picked up things and polished them, just as a servant would do. Then he made her lie down again, covered her up with the bedclothes once more, and led me out of the room, locking it carefully behind him.

" 'My boy,' he said to me, 'the next time you're scared of a White woman, remember that one.' "

I made no effort to conceal my immense astonishment.

"And you saw that in Harlem," I exclaimed. "In New York, in that very building we've just left!"

He had spoken so seriously, and he looked me in the eyes so steadily, that, at the moment, I could not feel incredulous.

"That," he said, almost violently, "is a very different thing from stories about women opium-smokers detained in Chinatown."

"It certainly is! I don't want to press you for any explanation you can't give . . . but I suppose that here, again, we have a stupefied state induced by some drug?"

He spread out his white palm, as though to disavow any technical knowledge.

"All I can say," he observed, "is that the ***zombi*** of the West Indies is not drugged. It's a matter of real wizardry."

"How do you mean?"

“Somebody dies. . . . The family mourns, and the body is buried. Then, if the grave is opened two or three days later, the body is no longer there.”

“It has been taken away?”

“Presumably.”

“Then wouldn’t the assumed corpse be simply in a state of coma, if it is ‘restored to life’ to become a ***zombi***? Would you call that wizardry? Or hypnotism? Somnambulism induced by a magnetiser?”

“ It looks as though it were something like that.”

“I remember now: they say that some of these half-phantoms work in the fields by night in Haiti on behalf of the necromancer.”

“So they say,” agreed Joshua, the cabaret-dancer, as cautiously as though he were a pupil of Charcot or de Mesnet.

“So such a thing happened, at least once, in America, right here in New York?”

“Why not here, if it is possible elsewhere?”

“Oh, it’s all stuff and nonsense!”

“It’s no laughing matter when a man says to you: ‘If you don’t keep quiet about it, you’ll soon be dead yourself.’ ”

“Well, perhaps it isn’t,” said I.

We had reached an Elevated station. I realised that Joshua was going to take advantage of the opportunity to leave me. He was already repentant, panic-stricken about his revelation.

“We’ve all got to die some time,” I told him cheerfully. “But how pleasant, my dear Mr. Joshua, to keep prisoner in one’s home a White slave. . . an ***absolute*** slave. . . whom everybody believes to be dead ! . . .”

He shook hands with me, hard, without a trace of a smile on his face. There are times when the faces of Coloured people assume a sheer brutality which is no longer to be seen among us long-civilised Whites.

Was this almost incredible story really his own? Had this mulatto got in his Bohemian lodging a charming feminine ***zombi***, Haitian style? I still wonder whether he had, or whether, as a high-class humorist, he was merely making fun of a curious, simple-minded European.

But how many living women disappear every year in a city such as New York—or Paris? ***Several thousand***! . . . And can we who live in countries where, ***at least officially***, sorcery is no longer in fashion, be sure that we know all about the powers of that great goddess, Nature?

As for ***zombis*** in Harlem—or, for that matter, in Haiti—I am certainly not prepared to take any responsibility, other than that of an impartial narrator—and a sceptic. But I confess that, since then, the idea gives me nightmares.

Mysterious Africa. . . . . “African-America!”

CHAPTER IX

FORGIVE ME, MY DEAR AMERICA !

ALL at once, the broad bulwark on which I was leaning conveyed a gentle but unmistakable shudder to me. Below me, the close welding which made ship and quay all one piece almost miraculously came apart and left a black line.

I could hardly believe the evidence of my own eyes; but already this line turned into a ditch, a gleaming depth of dark water: the water of the North River, the water of the Hudson.

Already I was ***a yard away*** from America.

How often, in the course of my roving life, have I thus felt myself detached from other continents, Europe, Asia or Africa, after the chances of travel, in the course of my visits to them, had helped me to enrich, in greater or less degree, my storehouse of affectionate memory!

I can recall no foreign country which I have left behind me with any dislike of it. Everywhere I had loved, or at least admired, some form of nature or civilisation. Everywhere I had occasion to be sincerely sorry that I was going away. Yet a traveller would be too unhappy, whenever a ship's screw parted him from one land more, if he could not comfort himself with the thought of what he may still discover ***elsewhere***.

Nevertheless, this departure left me more than usually saddened and upset. The feeling which secretly haunted me was this:

"Have I made sufficient study of this vast subject with which I have ventured to concern myself? Have I realised both how far-reaching and how ticklish a subject it is? Thanks to the testimony which I have collected, can I carry back to my own country, to France, so intensely interested in the racial problem, an opinion at once sound and useful? On the other hand, will America, whose repugnance for this question I have realised, forgive me for attacking it?"

I left the deck and went down to the first-class lounge. At this moment of departure, it was all light and animation. At the foot of the double staircase the orchestra was still playing the American national anthem. Members of the crew, in stokehole blue, were "stowing away," while smiling members of the purser's staff in tail-coats, behind their long desk, were allotting cabins to last-minute passengers, most of them regular travellers. A steward came up from the dining-saloon to bang the dinner-gong.

The whole atmosphere, glowing, luxurious, intimate and charming, was in short that atmosphere which has given the French Line a world-reputation all its own.

"The Transatlantique's motto does not lie," I reflected. "I can almost feel myself 'in Paris, six days beforehand.' "

Then, all at once, as I went and settled myself in the smoke-room, at a window from which I could watch the giant buildings of Manhattan parade past on the port side until at length they disappeared—all at once the fact of finding myself like this, on this kind of bridge of ideas between the two sides of the Atlantic, separated from both France and the United States, yet still linked to both of them, gave me the strength of mind to survey my own work impartially. I got the better of the contradictory scruples which had hitherto tormented me.

Just as I had done when I ended the travels which I have described in ***The Road to Shanghai***, I felt myself the bearer of tidings undoubtedly important: tidings of grave, even of capital importance to all the nations of my old White race. These tidings

summed themselves up in my invariable formula—no less true on my departure from North America than when I left Asia:

"***The Coloured races have discovered the White Woman to be the woman desirable above all others***."

Yes, any number of indications, among these Blacks whom I had just studied after the Yellows, proved to me that even there in the United States, despite both law and custom rigidly opposed to any mixture, this new idea, this new mental, social and physiological process, was acting with its full revolutionary force, with all its uncertain but boundless consequences.

Watched, suspected, threatened in the South with terrible punishment, still exposed even in the North to insult, the American Blacks are far from showing the open curiosity of the Chinese about the White woman. Nevertheless, she excites the interest of all of them—even those who hate her; even those who see in her only a sacrifice on the altar of mysterious superstitions.

And how could it be otherwise ?

Is not the White woman of America the most adored, the most endowed of all idols in a civilisation in which Christianity, sincere though it may be, co-exists with frank worship of money and sex?

For all her power, her luxury, her pleasures, even her licence; for all the adoration of the business men whose duty it was to maintain her high standard of living, this idol was ***bored***. That was clear to me, too.

Hence, in the case of some of these lovely creatures, so proud, but so poor in real enjoyment—hence the disdainful, sometimes the uneasy, the exasperated, the morbid attention paid by them to the Negro: the slave of yesterday and the fashionable entertainer of to-day; the child so droll in his natural animality; the indefatigable clown and athlete; the dancer and the jazz-musician who managed to give both rhythm and reason to the utmost intoxication and ***legitimatise*** it through harmony; the singer of heavenly hymns who was also capable of laying hold upon the most intimate emotions of the daughters of Eve—in short, the sorcerer, the medicine-man of fetishism as old as the world.

This again was, in my eyes, a factor perfectly explicable and quite normal. But it made all the second part of my investigation turn out to be sharply different from the first.

The Yellow, possessing an old civilisation, like ourselves, is capable of recognising the superiority of the White woman. But he has no link with her other than ***prostitution***.

The Black, incurably barbarous, is bound to admire his sovereign on grounds much less subtle. On the other hand, ***he sometimes arouses in her a certain reciprocity of interest***.

Quite exceptional—and incidentally deplorable—as I found this latter factor to be, nevertheless, it inevitably enlarged the scope of my investigation.

From a clear and simple view of the "race war," it lured me on into the dark depths of "raciality" itself. What is race? What is the law of sympathy and antipathy? What is heredity? How does it work in the course of generations? Is mixture in itself a good thing or a bad thing? In any case, is it possible to avoid it? Is not every marriage the union ***of two races,*** and does not its fruit mingle them?

I realised that I was far from having come to the end of exploration in this vast field. But were not errors in it forgivable, between men of good will, whatever might

be their prejudices or their susceptibilities? For, after all, what counted most was the urgency of focusing public opinion on the subject.

A friend of mine came and sat down beside me. He had a cheerful, frank face, and he was going grey before his time. He was a French doctor who had spent half his career in the United States.

I was so full of my ideas that I confided them to him on the spot. He jumped.

"You mean to say you're going to deal with the subject of White women and Black men in the United States in a book?"

"Yes, I'm afraid that's just what I'm going to do."

"Then you're mad. It's the last subject any gentleman would think of touching."

"Even if I assert and proclaim, over and over again, the absolute purity, so far as the 'sin of mixture' is concerned, of all the best feminine elements in American society?"

"You will still remain, in the eyes of that society, a very ill-bred person."

"Well, I shall be sorry for that. But I'm afraid I shall have to put up with it."

"Why should you have to?"

"Because it is my duty to enlighten the French public."

"Well, so far as we're concerned, you'll be doing something still funnier. In France racial mixture has ceased to be regarded as scandalous or ***tabu***. It doesn't worry anybody. ***Nobody pays any attention to it***."

"Have you read ***Mein Kampf***?" I asked.

"You mean Adolf Hitler's book ? Good Heavens, no! What's that got to do with it?"

I pulled a note-book out of my pocket and read the following passages:

" 'The role which France, systematically led by the Jews, is to-day playing in Europe is a crime against the existence of White humanity, and one day it will let loose against the French people all the vengeful spirit of a generation which recognises in race pollution the hereditary sin of humanity. . . . The contamination produced by the afflux of Negro blood on the Rhine, in the very heart of Europe, serves the purposes not only of the sadistic, perverse hatred of her eternal enemies, but also of the cold calculations of the Jews, who see a way of establishing their own domination by infecting the White race with the blood of a lower order of humanity. . . . The invasion of France by Negroes enables us to foresee the birth of an African empire. If this process of evolution still continues for another three hundred years at its present rate, the last traces of French blood will have disappeared in the mulatto State extending from the Rhine to the Congo: an immense territory peopled by an inferior race, which is now in slow course of formation through cross-breeding. . . .' "

My friend burst out laughing.

"Hitler wrote that when he was only a rebel, trying to make his people fanatical. Besides, he's recanted, hasn't he?"

"His book remains the Gospel of the whole of Germany."

"But that doesn't prevent it from being absurdly false. We are not invaded by the Blacks. Our population isn't a mulatto one ***yet***."

"Of course it isn't," I agreed. "But do you think it is wise ***to pay no attention***, as you put it, to a question with which our adversaries openly accuse us of being only too familiar?"

He finished the cigarette he was smoking, and suddenly turned serious.

"One thing certain," he said, "is that the French people and the American people are at this very moment each ***almost as composite*** as the other."

He crushed out his cigarette.

"Yes," he went on, "on both sides of the Atlantic the same process of migration has taken place, coming from East to West, contrary to the ***Drang nach Osten*** about which people talk. English and Scandinavians, and then Germans, Poles, Balkan and Latin peoples of every description, in addition to Asiatics from farthest Russia and Syria, have hurried on the heels of Columbus to the New World—just in the same way as, a thousand years earlier, the Huns and other barbarians swept into that end of Europe: France. In the case of the United States, as in the case of our Gauls, this afflux stopped. But it has started again in the course of the present century. Now the two peoples have this trait in common: they sum up, through types either remote or immediate, almost the whole of humanity."

"Identity in variety," I put in.

"In the United States, the Nordic contribution long predominated. It fitted in admirably with the original American nation, that of Washington and Franklin. But nowadays everything is being called in question again. The past, finding itself attacked, is tottering, or else concentrating itself in defensive islets, in ***castes***. At the same time, the more recent ethnical elements are crystallising too—castes again. Constitutional rights serve to create privileges for local majorities. These local majorities, united by origin and by religion, possess themselves of State and city administrative key-positions, drive out the hostile minorities, and call in their brethren isolated in other States. For example, to-day Boston has become a metropolis of Irish Catholics. Within the great republic, smaller republics are thus being created; or, to put it better, I repeat, ***castes***, in the Indian sense of the word."

"In India itself, for that matter," I pointed out, "these castes derive from very ancient invasions. And now, are we not in France running the risk of imitating this very curious process in America, through our own concentrations of Poles, Italians and German Jews, and the settlements of Moroccans, Kabyles, Annamites and Chinese which the mechanised war or its sequel created on French soil? Hitler calumniates us, and the German 'racists' push their inhuman theories to excess. But we are making just as great a mistake—though a less insulting and offensive one—if we ignore racial distinctions."

"Such distinctions undoubtedly exist," said my friend the doctor. "Indeed, ***there are distinct White races***, and very different ones, too. Some of them are endowed for war, others for art or trade. Similarly, there is an enormous distance, ethnical, biological and intellectual, between certain Blacks, who are the descendants of conquering tribes, and others, who are the descendants of enslaved tribes."

"Very well, then," I wound up, "the analogy of our own situation with that of the Americans fully justifies me in wanting to enlighten my fellow-countrymen on a subject ***which concerns them too***. I hope that my investigation will make them think about the mixture of races as it is now taking place in France. For there is no doubt, all Hitlerism apart, that ***there is a process of racial mixture***. And, even though in our case the 'melting-pot' may be a strong one, even though our colonial policy of frank union with the natives is a good one and a fine one—and also a necessary one—still we ought to see clearly ***where we are going***."

Out of the alley-way opposite us emerged a young woman of the most radiant American variety. She was in a dinner-dress; in other words, from her pale golden

hair to her graceful legs, very little of her beauty was hidden from us. The doctor bowed to her.

"Do what you like," he said, when she had sat down in the smoke-room some distance away from us. "But, whatever you do, respect the White woman. You see what a masterpiece, what a goddess, we have made of her—even though she is often, in secret, very sorry for herself, as I am in a position to know. So, whether she belongs to New York or Paris, admire her, and also ***have pity on her***. Don't destroy her prestige. It's about the only thing left to us amid the collapse of so many of our beliefs. . . ."

"You're quite right. And, from being lacking in respect to her, I propose solely to do her a service. It was for the very purpose of protecting her that I denounced the men who traffic in her in ***The Road to Shanghai***. In setting forth the subtle conflict which puts her in opposition to the Blacks of America, I am convinced that I shall be doing her no harm either. And if, finally, a third series of inquiries enables me to study the Frenchwoman herself and how she behaves in the midst of our own cosmopolitanism—the Frenchwoman and the Whites, the Blacks and the Yellows ***in France***—I hope that I shall have completed a cycle which will constitute a worthy wreath of flowers laid in honour on the altar of the White Venus."

"Go to the French West Indies and Haiti, and then to French Africa," advised my friend, who has travelled widely. "You will find there, in fact, Blacks quite different from those of America. In this sphere of creation, we too have accomplished marvels. The Frenchwoman is one of them, with her balance, her healthiness, her simplicity, her intelligence, her essential virtue. . . . The French Black, for his part, is the triumph of his race. And I may tell you at once that, apart from a few regrettable exceptions, he prefers, through innate common sense, women of his own colour. He does not, like the 'Nigger' of Chicago or Memphis, feel the goad of being warned off or seeking revenge. . . . Go to our French African colonies, I say, and you'll soon find that out for yourself."

"I'll go there as soon as I can," I promised.

PART THREE

THE NEW FACTOR

CHAPTER X

THE REVOLUTION AMONG COLOURED WOMEN

I

OUT of all countries which were unaffected in the past by the evolution of the White race, China is unquestionably the most highly developed. She is the country which at once comes into your mind if you are looking for an example of a civilisation other than our own.

Accordingly, it is to China that we must most often turn if we wish to study the so-called "Coloured" races ***in their most favourable conditions of life*** and in terms of their worthiest achievements.

One day I was walking on the outskirts of a provincial town in age-old, immense China. I had as my guide a friendly Celestial belonging to the younger generation of intellectuals. He was erudite, artistic and patriotic; and he lost no opportunity of impressing me with the genius of his great nation, as it was illustrated on the one hand by its tombs, and on the other by signs of its cautiously progressive future.

All at once, I caught sight of a little monument at the side of the road. It was a kind of very low tower, roofless, decrepit, almost in ruins. It had no windows, save for one square opening in its yellowish wall at about the height which a man could reach with outstretched arms.

"What's that?" I asked.

My companion seemed embarrassed.

"Oh," he growled, "that's nothing very interesting. Just a relic of far-off, barbarous times. It ought to have been demolished. What's the sense of perpetuating evil memories?"

"But would you be good enough to explain what it is?" I persisted.

"Well," he replied, after an awkward pause, "it used to be a 'baby tower'—a tower where babies were abandoned."

"Oh, I see!"

As a matter of ***amour-propre***—now that he had started talking about it—he led me up to the tower and told me all about its use. Its one and only opening had a broad ledge, a kind of stone shelf. A Chinese father who wanted to get rid of a new-born baby hoisted it, at arms' length, on to this ledge.

In this way ***the father himself did not put his child to death***. So far as he was concerned, he did it no harm at all. But, in the first place, exposure to the open air might suffice in itself to end the baby's feeble hold on life; and, in any case, the next visitor to the tower, another father carrying another victim, would inevitably administer the ***coup de grace*** to the first victim. For, as he gropingly pushed a second little body on to this kind of shelf, he could not help shoving the bundle which was already there into a pit beneath.

In this dodging of responsibility I recognised the whole of China, with all her refinement, all her mercilessness.

"But our ancestors never sacrificed here anything but babies of the feminine sex," my guide wound up eagerly. It was as though his whole heredity inspired him with this remark by way of excuse.

"Quite so," I remarked. "***They were only daughters***. . . . And, even though it hasn't been destroyed, I suppose this tower hasn't been used for a long time, has it?"

He dismissed any possibility of doubt on the subject with a smile so courteous that it would have been very rude of me to press him further. But he did not offer me the opportunity of seeing for myself whether any recent remains lay on the shelf or were down in the pit.

Will my good Chinese friends be offended if I now return to this subject quite frankly? Perhaps the "baby-tower" which I saw was really no longer in use. But it had been in use up to a very recent date, and so had any number of others like it up and down the enormous area of the Celestial Empire.

We once had a somewhat similar institution in Europe: those revolving boxes, fixed to the door of hospices and equipped with a bell, in which impoverished parents also deposited their superfluous offspring. But at least, among us Whites, these abandoned children were not doomed to death. They were simply entrusted to official charity.

In China, on the other hand, the idea of getting rid of a human being whom you had just brought into existence apparently was long regarded as quite in the natural course of things. Apart from these "baby-towers," the custom of drowning girl babies at birth was widespread. It corresponded exactly to the idea, among us, of drowning superfluous kittens.

Here we have one of the crucial points which enable us to measure ***the difference between White civilisation and other civilisations***. It must be admitted that the difference was not always considerable. Among the Whites, too, in the dark days of history, children were once killed without scruple, just as we still kill little domestic animals. For this and other reasons with which I shall deal in later chapters, as a mere matter of justice towards the Coloured I want to underline how little ahead we are. How little, and yet how much! In the course of centuries, races and their civilisations, just like horses on the turf, compete with one another, catch up with one another, pass one another ***barely by a head***. That margin, however, is of capital importance.

Before the Whites, were not the Yellows the master-race, the most highly civilised race? They may become so again after us—having suddenly taken a spurt forward by a head. ***For every race possesses a common humanity***: ***it may exhibit a momentary backwardness***; ***but it has the same infinite capacity for strength or weakness***. Such is the principle which must be admitted if any ethnological study is to avoid unfairness.

To this very day, in every peasant house in China, crude chromolithographs express the family's supreme prayer: that every child may be a male.

"May you have five sons, and may they all become mandarins!" is still the stereotyped salutation to a bridal pair. You offer embroidered shoes to Kuan-Nin, the good goddess of procreation, that she may spare you the birth of a daughter. If, nevertheless, such an undesired daughter arrives, you give her the name of a boy. In this way, according to popular superstition, the ***next child*** is bound to be born a male. The young bride also wears close to her bosom a little silver sword: a symbol intended to ward off such "souls of girls," and to attract such "souls of boys," as may be hovering around her at the moment of conception.

Even if the Chinese of yesterday let their girl children live, when they were questioned by a stranger about their families ***they did not count their daughters***. "I have two children," they would say. That meant "two sons." The man concerned might have half a dozen daughters, too; but he did not think them worth mentioning.

So, if the Chinese drowned their new-born daughters or exposed them to death, they did so, in general, quite as much from contempt for them or indifference towards them as from poverty.

In periods of real famine, these Celestials of olden days preferred— and so, indeed, some of our own contemporaries in the depths of the Chinese provinces still do—to ***sell*** their infant daughters. It was a simple solution in an over-populated land, where human beings grow like vegetables. In China there has always been an enormous, and quite public, traffic in children: that is to say, a ***traffic in little girls***. Until yesterday, if not to this very day, girls of five or six years old were sold in order to pay taxes, or family funeral expenses. There were any number of recognised merchants. The sale was the subject of a regular contract. The child became the property of the buyer, his chattel. He could do just what he liked with her.

The little girls thus bought were brought up—I prefer to use the past tense, but I emphasise the possibility that such practices still exist— for re-sale. The process of training them was known as ***cho-chu-fa***, a poetical and truly Chinese term meaning "flower-growing." Less good-looking girls served as a recruiting-field for the ***mui-tsai***, those semi-servants, semi-slaves, who are often ill-treated. The better-looking ones went to join the immense army of prostitutes. They were dealt with just like any ordinary commodity. They were dispatched by the waggon-load, or even by the ship-load, like cattle, wherever there was any demand for them.

In the worst periods of distress, during those famines which failure of the rice-crop or floods make almost regular in China, there is no knowing how many parents, instead of selling their despised daughters, ***ate*** them. Collections used to be made in Europe to save little Chinese girls from being eaten. It was established that they were eaten, and missionaries might be able to provide proof that they still are. In the depths of China—the world's ***most highly civilised nation*** apart from the White nations—there used to be plenty of cannibalism, with baby girls as the victims. "Flower-growers" lurked near the "baby-towers" to rescue abandoned children; and sometimes they proceeded to serve them up to satisfy the monstrous appetite of cannibals. Apart from famine, an element of ***taste*** entered into this cannibalistic custom.

The picture which I have just sketched of ***the condition of the non-White woman up to our own times***, in a civilisation where she was most favourably treated, will help to prepare the reader's mind for her treatment in other "Coloured" countries less civilised than China.

Let us now see what we know about the ***past*** of such other countries, so far as women were concerned.

II

The human race perpetually produces ***too many children of the feminine sex***. What we know about primitive peoples assures us that, all over the world, many of them were destroyed at birth. Nevertheless, enough remained to provide every man with more than one companion.

In primitive society, men mostly met violent deaths, in the course of hunting or fighting, facing danger in order to feed or defend their little clan: women, children, weaklings. Later it became the custom for widows to be treated as the trophy, the absolute property, of victors or neighbours; and, during periods of cannibalism, naturally such prey, being the most accessible, the best nourished and the most tasty, was the first to be devoured.

Cannibalism once existed all over the world. Everywhere it was a consequence of famine, combined with lack of conscience.

In the White world, however, there occurred an early process of evolution, which we may sum up in one word: Christianity. Elsewhere, on the other hand, terribly cruel customs persisted, in some cases up to our own times.

Even in Darwin's, the inhabitants of Tierra del Feugo, in periods of famine, asphyxiated the old women of their tribes by holding their heads over fires of green wood. Then they proceeded to cook them thoroughly.

The Battas of Sumatra and the natives of the Marquis islands have barely renounced similar practices. Up to the time of the British colonisation of New Zealand, the Maori tribes used to travel long distances to attack one another and capture women and children for the specific purpose of eating them. When a chief was killed, the "law of nations" went so far as to demand that his wives should be handed over to the victorious enemy in great solemnity. The unhappy women were killed and roasted under the supervision of the medicine men, who kept the titbits for themselves.

In the region of New Caledonia, and as far afield as the New Hebrides and the Solomon islands, this custom of cannibalism, with women as the preferred victims, also persisted up to yesterday, and it is questionable whether it has really ceased altogether.

At the end of the last century, old Kanakas used to lie in wait for women who ventured far from their villages unprotected. They killed them in the jungle, and made secret repasts of them. When their sons were dissuaded by White missionaries from committing such crimes, the subject became one of heated argument among the men around the fires at night. The sneers of the veterans made the young men feel ashamed, and often revived in them the temptation towards this horrible form of gluttony. For in this case, real scarcity of food was no longer the sole cause of cannibalism, and an element of perversion entered into the matter—just as it did in China.

Stories of women disappearing, and supposed to be carried off as the prey of "panther-men"—a kind of were-wolves very active in Negro countries—are common in the Tropics all the way from Guinea and the Cameroons to Haiti and Cuba. These stories, too, boil down to the old custom of eating the weak, later complicated by an unavowable taste for feminine flesh.

In the anarchic days of Black Africa, this custom was undoubtedly very common. The only thing that stood in the way of the choice of women as food for preference was the belief that eating the corpse of a human being meant appropriating the qualities of the person devoured. This tended to lead to the eating of males such as kings and chiefs, when available.

The Australian aborigines also killed women for eating in default of other food. The same custom is recorded in the Philippine archipelago, in certain islands of the Northern Pacific and in Siberia. The Redskins of North America, when they raided Eskimo camps, resorted to human game if they found no other provender. At Mukden, I was told by some Japanese that a market used to be held under the old fortified wall of the Manchu capital at which girls stolen from China and Korea were sold not only as slaves, but also as food.

But woman, once destroyed at birth as an undesirable expense, or degraded to the value of an article of diet, benefited by a better state of affairs, in all the races which we may call "non-White," to the extent of acquiring a chance of survival. Even if she did not serve as an instrument of production, at least she could either work or amuse, become a beast of burden or a creature for pleasure.

“I bought her,” said a Kaffir, quoted by Spencer, “so why shouldn’t she work for me?”

In fact, to this very day the Kaffir woman remains “her husband’s ox.” The Mandingo women go far afield in the forest to fetch wood and water. They sow and hoe the fields and harvest the crops. In New Caledonia, the chiefs possess ten, twenty, or even thirty concubines. The more numerous they are, the better the plantation prospers, and the more the chief is respected.

Naturally this polygamy reduces every concubine to the rank of a mere head of cattle. The chief has power of life or death over her, and exercises it fully. Brutality is an essential part of the system. There is a classical story of a Black chief who was away from his village for a time, and on his return had all his wives whipped. When he was asked what they had done, he replied: “As I was away, they are bound to have misbehaved themselves, and so I am punishing them.”

The Negro princes of West Africa in Burton’s time had as many as three hundred wives working for them. In our own days, Mgr Molin, who has studied the Bambaras, the Malinkis and the Guerzis of the Sudan and Guinea, writes of a certain chief : “He has more than five hundred wives. It is, in fact, difficult to say just how many; for the chief himself does not know the exact number. Some of the girls who are bought by chiefs remain in their villages until they are wanted. They represent wealth, productive capital.”

Such large-scale polygamists exploit their property in wives by hiring them out to other men less rich. They derive a regular income from pocketing the price of what we should call adultery.

In accordance with this system of life, it is quite common for a chief to send one of his wives to spend the night with a friend who admires her, or with a traveller whom he wishes to honour.

Father Canet, a missionary in the Cameroons, writes: “You can appreciate the painful position in which the fetishist society of the heart of Africa places woman. She is bought, sold, hired out and bequeathed; she has no status, no rights of her own, and her wretchedness is extreme. Nevertheless, faced with customs so deeply rooted in tradition, the European administrations themselves have not yet been able to achieve the social progress which is desirable. So they tolerate ***the absolute slavery of the woman***.”

Mme Blanche Vogt, too, wrote in 1935 about the vast area of Africa colonised by France: “The Black woman does not get enough to eat. African husbands, as everybody knows, are quite prepared to yoke their wives to the plough. The husbands ride on their donkeys, while the wives walk behind carrying the baggage. The wife does all the heaviest jobs. She has sickly children, and a frightfully high proportion of them die in infancy. The abolition of slavery seems to have emancipated only the Black men.”

Given this system of morality, our whole idea of the sentimental side of love is obviously unintelligible to such people.

“The Negro,” says Monteiro, “understands neither love nor affection between the sexes. During all the years I have lived in Africa, I have never seen a Black put his arm round a woman’s waist, or give her a caress of any kind. The Blacks have no word in their dialects which signifies love between husband and wife.”

Even the Laotians of Upper Indo-China—though, among all the Yellows, they are a particularly voluptuous and affectionate people—were not familiar, before the arrival of the Whites, with any expression of affection between husband and wife other

than rubbing their noses together. The kiss was practically unknown to all the Coloured peoples up to our own time.

On the other hand, in the days when adultery on the part of a wife was tantamount to treason against the omnipotence of the husband, these peoples punished it with frightful tortures. The law of the sage Manou laid it down that an adulterous wife should be devoured by dogs. Elsewhere she was burned, sawn in half, or crushed by an elephant. In Southern China, only yesterday, the skin of her forehead was first pulled down over her eyes, and then she was skinned alive little by little. In other Chinese districts she was tied to a raft, it was then pushed out into the current of a river, and she was left either to die slowly if the raft drifted into a backwater or to be dashed to pieces in the depths of rapids.

Such was the point from which women, Yellow, Brown, and Black, started on a quite recent process of evolution, which is so sudden that it may well be called a revolution.

III

Now let us turn to the strides, sentimental and intellectual, which Coloured women have made in our own time.

Yunnanfu, on the borders of Southern China, used to be, in the days of the Manchu empire with its capital at Peking, a sort of semi-colonial administrative centre, similar to what Palermo in Sicily was in the days of the Roman Empire. To-day this city in the mountains is linked with French Indo-China by a boldly engineered and highly picturesque railway-line. As a result, White civilisation is beginning to penetrate there. But the city still preserves intact all the features of the oldest Far East.

I was there one morning, in a narrow, muddy, very smelly street. I watched the Yellow population swarming in between the little horned-roof houses, all askew. Some of them were in rags, others in their time-honoured silk robes. My European eyes were struck, above all, by the spectacle of women with mutilated feet.

As everybody knows, such mutilation was an immemorial custom throughout China until quite recent years. All little girls of respectable families had to undergo this treatment, which may seem extremely cruel according to our way of thinking, but was regarded in Chinese eyes as a part of proper upbringing and beauty culture. The victims, belonging, as they did, to a despised sex, might think themselves lucky enough to have escaped being sent to a "baby-tower."

For a long time every day their feet were steeped in very hot water. Then their young flesh, thus softened, was tightly bandaged in such a way as to eliminate the angle of the ankle and turn the toes back against the sole of the foot, with the result that the weight of the body rested solely on the toe-joints, as though on a clenched fist. This practice, continued over a period of years, finally created an ankylosis. The feet came to resemble pointed clogs, and the little girls walked in the way which our ancestors attributed to fauns.

Nothing could be more attractive, from the point of view of a Chinese artist. Poets spoke of such feet as "flower-like," called them "golden lilies," and compared the tottering steps of Chinese girls with the graceful swaying of bamboo stirred by a breeze.

We have ourselves invented some fashions so extravagant that the memory of them may well attenuate our condemnation of this highly original style of beauty. But I cannot think of the terrible suffering which its application inflicted on millions of poor little creatures without feeling sick with sympathy for them.

The Chinese poets are also minute realists, and sometimes dilettantes of sadism. It is easy to understand how they delighted in noting complacently the pangs and plaints of the unfortunate little girl, “who would love to run and play, but must sit down all day long because her feet torture her.” The first eighteen months especially, according to an English witness, Mr. J. R. Chitty, were frightful. He adds: “How parents could bear to live at home with that endless sobbing, aggravated by fits of heartrending screams, is beyond all European comprehension.” It is on “a bush of tears,” so a Chinese proverb says, that two “flower-feet” bloom in all their glory.

The new Republican China has forbidden this inhuman torture. But, in certain provinces, remote from Nanking, it has become one of the claims put forward by the reactionary spirit. At this very moment, baby girls are once more being mutilated in the name of conservative ideals.

In Yunnanfu, it was rather old women, or women already well advanced into middle age, whom I saw deformed in this way. That did not make the spectacle any the less painful. Their costume, consisting of a blue cotton tunic reaching half-way down their thighs, very tight trousers and high boots, accentuated the strange shape of their legs, which ended in a point. Almost all of them carried on these insufficient supports bodies weighty with age and lack of exercise. Fat and paunchy, they made their way tottering over the uneven ground, just as overfed geese might do if they had the feet of wading birds.

It is said that little girls belonging to poor families never had their feet bound, because they were destined to work. Yet the sad wrecks whom I saw often looked far from rich. They were not carried in any litter, nor followed by any servant. They may have been ruined by the fall of the Empire; or perhaps their parents had turned their feet into “golden lilies” in their infancy, in the hope of making them the concubines of great personages, but had been disappointed.

Despite their mutilation, these unfortunate women had fallen back into the laborious life of the class to which they really belonged. So they had to hobble about as best they could in discharge of their domestic duties, even if they had not to work hard in the fields, pull carts, push barrows, or haul up sampans.

Those whom I saw were obviously long since resigned to their fate. They helped themselves along with the aid of sticks, or leant on their brood of children. But their gait, now hopping, now hesitant, still irresistibly suggested the idea of pain, or at least of continual anxiety.

They were incapable of running. They could never have attempted to escape without falling down. With that crippled gait of theirs, they could not even walk very far. Was not this, in fact, the main object of the men of the old days who invented this barbarous practice?

Under pretext of achieving a work of art, they were probably pandering to their own jealousy, their own tyranny. They were imposing on the very bodies of their women the obligation of captivity, of slavery. They broke their feet just as one clips the wings of tamed birds. It was, after all, a philosophy of sex not so very far removed from that of the Spaniards of past centuries, who would not have shrunk from laming their women in order to keep them the better incarcerated.

But, despite this European memory, and despite the memory of the ultra-tight whalebone corsets—another device for cramping normal life—which were in use among us as late as 1900, I felt as though I were in the presence of something monstrous, as though I were on a different planet.

I turned away; and all at once, side by side with this monstrosity, in the main street of Yunnanfu, I caught sight of a group of Chinese girl students, from fifteen to twenty years of age.

Their feet, quite normally developed, were shod in sensible leather shoes with low heels, just like those of a sporting English girl. Their short skirts disclosed shapely legs in turned-down stockings. Their sports-shirts were enlivened by English-style club-ties. They were made-up in accordance with European fashion, and they were smoking cigarettes. They were laughing and talking at the top of their voices, just like emancipated European bachelor-girls.

What they were talking about was neither studies nor politics. They were on their way to the hairdresser: the first ladies' hairdresser to set up shop in the heart of Yunnanfu. He was an Annamite, trained by the master-barbers of Hanoi. He had just introduced this startling innovation into Yunnanfu. He had the most up-to-date equipment; and he was apparently enjoying a great success.

Through his shop-window I could see a Yellow girl in a white wrap, tilted back in an American barber's chair, sitting patiently with her head in a helmet of shining metal, which was giving her black hair a permanent wave. The girls outside were studying photos of styles of hairdressing—with Tonkin girls as models—which were displayed in the shop-window, flanked by scent-bottles. They were discussing what waves, what curls, would best suit their faces, which they were bent on revolutionising.

IV

In the most widely different parts of the world I might have seen, and in fact I have seen, a similar juxtaposition, a similar existence, side by side, of two violently contrasting types of femininity.

Within a few minutes, or indeed almost at one and the same glance, I might observe a native woman as utterly exotic, as completely barbarian in appearance, as though the Whites had never had anything to do with the land of her birth; and another woman, belonging to the same race, but transformed by imitation of our clothes, our mode of life and even our ***colour***. Sometimes this latter woman, in disguising herself in this way, had achieved nothing but a comical or pitiful masquerade. But sometimes, if she was more sophisticated or better suited to the part, she accomplished a masterpiece of acting, artistically in the best of taste. Sometimes she even conveyed the disturbing effect of a perfect double of her model, the White woman.

So in Haiti, just as in Liberia or Egypt; so in Kenya, just as in Ceylon and the Philippines, the Negress, natural and noisy, half-naked in her shapeless rags, with her hair either left woolly or plastered with rancid butter, scampered along the same street in which a Black or mulatto woman walked sedately on her Louis XV heels, clad in European style, and made-up, powdered and perfumed with an obvious desire to attenuate the shiny black of her complexion.

So in the courtesans' district in Kyoto, within ten yards, I met ***mousmees***, in kimonos and wooden clogs, and modernised Japanese girls on their way to a dance, in outlandish furbelows, such as the heroines of an American comic film might wear.

The same thing is going on all over the world.

What the chance sight of that violent contrast in Yunnanfu brought home to me was, in fact, the progress of a world-wide revolution.

The Coloured woman as we had hitherto known her, so opposite to our own type of femininity, was denying all her traditions and emancipating herself. She was transforming herself, at least so far as clothes went, into an adept of our fashions. She looked as though she wanted ***to imitate the White woman***.

Was this revolutionary innovation merely a detail in the general evolution of the Chinese, and of all the Coloured peoples, towards the material progress, the higher standard of living, represented by Western civilisation?

Or was it not, on the contrary, ***an altogether special process***, in the sense that, in the course of transforming not only the appearance, but also the scope, of women it was bound to extend far beyond merely physical attributes and upset the relations between the two sexes and the principles underlying marriage, the family and the whole of society?

Of course, I was not the first person to notice this state of affairs; nor am I the first to point it out. But observation does not amount to much unless you grasp the meaning of what you see.

In the eyes of some travellers, the world holds no secrets. They move about so wrapped up in themselves, or so convinced that ***their*** customs are the best, that nothing abroad strikes them as surprising or worth attention. Globe-trotters of this kind have doubtless ***seen*** the contrast to which I refer; but they have disdained to take any interest in it.

In the eyes of other travellers the fact suffices that this is a question of women, a question of fashion. Accordingly they dismiss the subject as one of no importance. They forget that everything holds together, so they depict the awakening of the Coloured women to the system of aesthetics inspired by White women as merely a matter of chance, essentially trifling and leading simply to picturesque or comical consequences. They thus fail to consider anything more than the most superficial aspect of the problem.

If I regard it as my business to study it with the closest attention, it is because, on the contrary, it strikes me as repaying analysis for its essential relationship with the great racial drama. To my mind, here we have the primary explanation of the racial rivalry whose weight we can already feel in our adverse trade balances, in the high cost of living in our capitals, in our diplomatic difficulties, and in the precariousness of our peace.

The crises, the famines, the wars, the invasions of to-morrow or of the coming century are entirely conditioned beforehand by the evolution of Asia and Africa. This evolution itself depends, at least as much as upon obvious economic factors, upon a human factor: sexual, intellectual, and even religious. Of that factor ***the first token is the transformation of Coloured women***.

This transformation is, in fact, everywhere a matter of scandal, almost a sacrilege. It runs counter to traditions which hitherto have been respected as dogmas. The framework of life which is thus being shaken has deeper and more sacred foundations than any hierarchy of wealth or caste. What is in opposition is not merely the rich woman and the poor woman, not merely the woman of noble birth and the woman of serf birth. We see side by side, on one and the same level in these vast Asiatic and African societies, women who ***remain faithful to the genius of their race***, and women who reject, betray and ***deny the genius of their race***, in favour of adopting an alien one borrowed from Europe and America.

If we leave secondary variations aside, we may say, roughly speaking, that ***every Colour constitutes a race of humanity***, ***and this colour***, ***this race, is endowed with a genius which has produced a civilisation***.

We have the civilisation of the Yellows, then that of the Browns, next that of the Blacks, and finally that of the Whites: majestic columns erected in every clime under the sun to the glory of mankind, which has everywhere overcome the brute creation. These different civilisations long remained ignorant of one another, owing to the lack of means of communication. To-day they confront one another, thanks to the Whites. Even before any question of their possible collaboration, or their possible combination, a preliminary question presents itself: that of their relative value.

Is our own civilisation really superior? It would certainly be superior if it made everybody who accepts it happy. Whether it does so is questionable; but this is a question which I do not propose to discuss here.

What is much clearer, much more certain, is that our White civilisation, by making scientific use of raw materials and natural forces, has acquired unrivalled power and prestige. It has thus won at least a political supremacy.

But hitherto, however hard and skilfully it tried, it made nothing more than illusory or very fragmentary conquests in the sphere of customs, taste, art, philosophy and religion among the peoples whom its guns and its planes kept under colonial administration.

White civilisation itself, indeed, seemed to avow that its miraculous success was limited to the sphere of industry and war. It appeared to concede equality in art, in intellect, in the whole realm of ideas, to the Coloured races which it had under its heel. Often, in fact, through the medium of its archaeologists, its explorers, its critics and its poets, it ascribed to these races a refinement which was a kind of consolation-prize, merely honorary—and therefore harmless.

Were we not all brought up amid the legends of a foreign fairyland? Chinese art and Hindu art; the wisdom of Confucius and the mysticism of the Brahmans and the Lamas; the heroism of the Japanese Samurai and the Red Indian warriors; and then, more recently, the symbolism of the sculptors and sorcerers of Polynesia, Malaya and the Congo—we have paid the tribute of the most sincerely respectful curiosity to all these products of a mentality very remote from our own. We have, at a pinch, systematised them, rationalised them; we have exaggerated their significance, their originality, their charm; ***we have deceived ourselves in our eagerness to admire them***.

As for Coloured women in particular, our gift for idealising, for romanticising, has been exercised on their behalf almost ever since the time of the Crusades. The legend of exotic lady-loves, of Brown or Yellow charmers, goes back to the troubadours, and it has flowered in dazzling romances by the thousand in every European literature from the ***Roman de Troie,*** which inspired Shakespeare's ***Troilus and Cressida***, ***to*** the work of Pierre Loti.

In point of fact, is not all this mere imagination, mere excess of indulgence, on our part? Are not White civilisation, and the White race itself, endowed with a physical, intellectual and artistic pre-eminence, which our femininity, that favoured field, has incomparably exalted? This is what I am concerned to study; and obviously nothing is of more capital importance to our future destiny.

Be this as it may, we may already take for granted the ***world-wide existence of a new factor***. There is scarcely a single spot left on earth where the White woman has not made her appearance, in person or in effigy, thanks to the cinema and the innu-

merable resources of our publicity; and there is scarcely a single spot left where she has not produced some kind of imitation, rough-and-ready or close as the case may be, among the native women.

The contrast, the conflict between tradition and this innovation does not merely manifest itself everywhere in the appearance, side by side, of the native woman in her original state and the "pseudo-White" woman. It is to be observed still more poignantly in the duality of one and the same woman. It is ***one and the same Coloured woman*** who is, at one and the same time, the heiress of the genius of her own race and the imitator of a foreign race. If she incarnates these two opposite, inimical personalities; if she endures the suffering due to their rivalry within her, must not the impulse that leads her to rebel against a whole immemorial past be so strong as to be irresistible?

V

In the course of his travels in India, Aldous Huxley has noted the "incredible mixture of the magnificent and the cheap, the grandiose and the ludicrously homely," in the palaces of the native princes.

"Cows bask on the front steps; the ante-room is filthy with the droppings of pigeons; beggars doze under the gates, or search one another's heads for lice. . . . In the throne-room, nobody quite knows why, there stands a brass bedstead with a sham mahogany wardrobe from the Tottenham Court Road beside it; framed colour prints from the Christmas number of the ***Graphic*** of 1907 alternate along the walls with the most exquisite Rajput and Persian miniatures; in the unswept jewel-room, five million pounds' worth of precious stones lie indiscriminately heaped; the paintings are peeling off the walls of the private apartments, a leprosy has attacked the stucco, there is a hole in the carpet; the marble hall of audience is furnished with bamboo chairs, and the Rolls-Royces are driven by ragged chauffeurs who blow their noses on the long and wind-blown ends of their turbans."[1]

Such startling contrasts have similarly struck every contemporary traveller belonging to the White race who has visited these palaces, where the legendary luxury of the Coloured races might be expected to display itself to the best advantage.

I was myself struck by such contrasts in the homes of native princes, and also those of millionaire merchants, where I had the honour to be a guest; and I am bound to say so, at the risk of offending my hosts. In these palaces, whose owners still possess wealth and power, two things take the Westerner aback: first, the juxtaposition of fine native work and crude bazaar stock; and, second, the neglect, or even disgusting dirtiness, of everything.

Used it to be the same in such places in the past? As for the shoddy, its importation is recent. Our own century was the first to witness the world-wide diffusion of European furniture and utensils. So we may take it that in past centuries foreign potentates did not run any risk, either through desire to be in the fashion or through lack of taste, of doing any injustice to the marvels of local craftsmanship.

As for neglect or dirtiness, ***or what strikes us as such***, doubtless we judge it too severely. The climate of hot countries, the terrible tropical sun, the ravages of humidity or the destructiveness of sand, constitute extenuating circumstances which no Nordic can estimate fairly. On the other hand, while to-day we pride ourselves, and rightly, on the fact that our upper-class town houses and country houses are kept spot-

[1] ***Jesting Pilate.***

lessly clean by our modern equipment—and by the vigilance of well brought-up White women as household mistresses—let us not forget that, among the working-class and the peasantry, our own race in Europe and America only too often stagnates amid ugliness and squalor, despite the financial resources available and the facilities provided by favourable climate and hygienic organisation.

Even if we do not go so far back as the royal courts of feudal France, which were barbarous in the extreme, what the chroniclers reveal to us about domestic life at Versailles at the time of Louis XIV is of such a nature as to make us indulgent towards other races. Let us put it that our state of relative perfection is still almost new, that its scope is limited, and that its permanence is precarious. Nevertheless, it exists. It is a criterion of human capacity, in the first place for ourselves, and in the next place for the contemporary aristocracies ***among all the Coloured peoples***.

It constitutes, in short, one of our claims to greatness. That is all the more reason why we should not be too hard upon the fumbling performances of those who imitate us. It is for us to give them a better standard by which to criticise the odds and ends that they are all inclined to regard as gorgeous once a Western firm puts them within their reach.

But the fact remains that, ***unless there happens to be a White woman in the home***, scarcely any residence of a potentate, Yellow, Brown or Black, even if it be made up exclusively of native arts and crafts, presents either the harmony, or the spotless cleanliness, of a similar home in a White country.

I repeat that, among us, ***the role of woman in our striving for comfort and beauty was essential***. It is true that, among us Whites, some men of the upper class surround themselves with an artistic environment, and remain irreproachably correct in their attire, even though no woman keeps them up to the mark. But they constitute exceptions few and far between. As a rule, it is the White woman who creates around her, primarily on her own account, our standard of aesthetics; and she imposes it upon the men of her family.

Coloured women cannot possess any such prerogative. Generally speaking, they have always been social inferiors. So it would be unfair to blame them for the lack of care, or the lack of harmony, which shocks us in the Versailles of Africa and Asia. All we can say is that the indifference to details of harmony, hygiene and cleanliness shown by the masters of these modern foreign palaces is largely due to the absence of any standard such as the White woman upholds among us. If Coloured men can live quite unaffected in the midst of discordant things, broken things, dirty things, ***is not this primarily a consequence of their traditional contempt for femininity***? They deliberately kept their naturally most refined counsellors out of their confidence.

In old China, in India, in the Malay States, in the former Negro sultanates, women were disqualified from the start, and their status was still further degraded by the practice of polygamy. We find traces of this system to this very day, even in the Near East. The woman's subjection to competition, or often to a state of legal slavery, reduced her to the timid, short-sighted psychology of a servant. Alternatively, the caste-system excluded her from any active occupation. For example, in Annam I saw queens-dowager whose nails were so excessively long that they were helpless and had to be waited upon by a whole cohort of footmen and ladies-in-waiting.

Up to our own period, over the whole "non-White" area of the planet ***man alone settled domestic arrangements and customs***.

Hence, too, arises that almost Spartan simplicity which so often astonishes European new-comers. Right-angled arm-chairs, with seats and backs of bare wood or

marble panels; beds of lacquered wood, covered simply with matting; pillows of wood or porcelain, such as are still in use in the princely ***yamens*** in Szechuen—all these give us to understand that, in these regions, a purely masculine outlook has always opposed any finicalness.

They also enable us to realise the sybaritic sense of enjoyment which must be conveyed to the weak, the highly strung, the refined, and therefore naturally to women, by the possession of what seem to us the most commonplace articles of furniture: a chair, curved in accordance with the shape of the human body, which actually rocks; a spring-mattress; a basin with running water; a wardrobe with a mirror which gives you a full-length view of yourself.

Discovery of such things registered enormous progress not only for the really barbarous African and Oceanic races, but even for the heirs of other civilisations, who, lacking our scientific methods, had never applied themselves to the mastery of matter to any greater extent than the ancient Romans. If we look at it from this point of view, it ceases to be surprising that, in the presence of such a pleasant revelation, the artistic instinct of the Yellows or the Browns should momentarily abdicate, and that the most aristocratic of them should delight in housing our ugliest fabrications side by side with their own ancestral treasures. Such infatuation is common to all periods of transition.

So far as our subject here is concerned, the interest of this invasion of the Coloured by luxury, whether in good taste or in bad taste, lies precisely in its results upon women. There is a ***coincidence*** between the influx of Western shoddy and the emancipation of any number of creatures who were hitherto ***lacking in personality***.

Scarcely anywhere did the Coloured woman possess the necessary personality to undertake, on her own account, ***the Europeanisation of her environment***. But Western influence, since it also affects the structure of society in the sphere of ideas, now provides her with innumerable opportunities for expressing her opinion, whether favourable or unfavourable. So she is becoming ***a secondary agent***, ***but a more and more active and enthusiastic one***, in this Coloured adoption of our luxuries and our commodities.

The down pillow, instead of the porcelain pillow, is becoming one of the demands she makes in her revolutionary programme; and why should she not have it? Whether we should reckon this as a real benefit for ideas in general, and for the happier future of all races, is another matter. Sparta and Sybaris alike consistently claimed that each was exclusively right in its respective doctrine.

But this fact remains: ***henceforth every gain in material comfort increases both the revolutionary demands of the Yellow woman or the Black woman inspired by her admiration for the White woman, and her revolutionary strength in her efforts to imitate the White woman***.

VI

Here I approach an aspect of this study more delicate than any other. But it is one which I can least of all avoid. I mean what we call love. I shall endeavour to deal with it quite unaffectedly.

Let me begin, then, with the crudest form of this world-wide issue between man and woman. I have visited a good number of the districts devoted to prostitution in the great cities of the Coloured races; and even certain cities whose activity in this direc-

tion is almost wholly for the benefit of foreigners—for example, Macao, where Chinese from all over the Southern provinces go to gamble and consort with courtesans.

This little Portuguese colony, situated on an island not very far from Hong Kong, has a Riviera climate. It is another Monte Carlo, and a Cythera, too. Its gambling-houses, its opium-dens and its establishments of sing-song girls succeed one another in a warren of twisting streets bordered by arcades, with roofs with curved points overhead. By night it is as bright as day with all the electricity which is lavished upon enormous signs, stars, dragons, fantastic fish and gigantic Chinese characters sketched by hundreds of many-coloured lamps. Everywhere wireless loud-speakers whine interminable Oriental songs.

The West has already transformed this setting. Nevertheless, in the narrow streets the old China still swarms, in all its rags, with all the motley, all the originality, that strike me as so attractive. Macao is one of the spots on earth where, though magnificence might be lacking, the gay interplay of the lights gave me some idea of that exotic fairyland lauded by old-time travellers ever since the tales of the Arabs.

I rediscovered this legendary Asia even better when some friends took me to the Rua da Felicidade, the "Street of Happiness." This street is on a slope, and I first saw it from right up at the top. I uttered an exclamation of delight. Apart from the electric lights which diapered all the balconies, at our feet burned two rows of regular braziers, lit on the roadway outside every house.

Over the flames leant graceful little creatures in shining silk robes. They threw armfuls of paper-gilt on to the fires, while old women in dark tunics, standing beside them, kept the flames under control by sprinkling water on them from time to time.

Here, my guides told me, lived the most accomplished courtesans in Macao. Almost all of them ended by becoming the "third wives" of wealthy men.

It so happened that an epidemic of cerebro-spinal meningitis was decimating the city. These young courtesans were offering sacrifices to their good geniuses to save them from the scourge. While this mystical medicine may have been doubtful in its efficacy, in any case it presented a very pretty spectacle.

We made our way into the midst of the officiants. The light of the flames reddened their little faces. I confessed that I was curious to make their closer acquaintance. On the spot, a supper-party was organised for my benefit in the guest-room of one of the best establishments.

The furniture consisted of an ancestral altar, a red and gold lacquered stool with joss-sticks smoking on it; a hard bed; and a chest and stools, on which our ***hetaerae*** perched and played us shrill songs on cytheras, struck by two supple sticks. For fear of spoiling their robes of ceremony, the girls tucked them up unceremoniously and exhibited cotton drawers none too clean. Seen close-up, they were clumsily painted and powdered. The smell of the street, that fearful aroma of brine and excrement which all China exhales, came in through the open windows and mastered the faint perfume of the joss-sticks and the musk-oil with which these ladies had apparently rubbed their coarse black hair. The next-door arrangements, in addition, showed that there was little regard here for what we consider elementary hygiene.

But, so far as I was concerned, I was quite ready to overlook all these imperfections for the sake of the picturesque. My most eager desire was to make these Macao girls forget that I was a guest belonging to a different race, and revert to their more natural ways. Happily my Portuguese and Chinese companions were old acquaintances of theirs. After a few moments of embarrassed shyness, they stopped thinking about me and started prattling and laughing with taking, but also total, childishness. They were even more infantile in brains than in years.

For one half, if not three-quarters, of the Coloured peoples the social effacement of the woman finds one of its logical forms of expression in the law of her passivity in love. She is an inferior, she is a slave; and she submits humbly to the will of her lord and master. There is not simply a physical gulf, there is also an intellectual gulf between the courtesan—and perhaps the concubine, or even the wife—and the masculine god. ***In every sphere there is the least possible approach***.

Another official in Indo-China, and one in a high position, told me that during his early years of colonial service, being a bachelor, he entered into a contract with a charming ***geisha*** who had come from Japan. He did this to avoid taking a native mistress, which would have been bad for his authority. This Japanese girl had been living with him for some months. She managed his household perfectly, and was always smiling. One evening, however, he came home unexpectedly and heard her moaning. She was in tears; but, as soon as she caught sight of him, she at once made herself look cheerful again. By dint of pressing her, he ended by making her confess to him that she had just received a letter telling her that her father was dead. "But I should never have told you," she added, "***for I am not here to make you sad***."

VII

But there is a still greater difference between the White woman and Coloured women.

For centuries upon centuries masculine despotism, as we have seen, deprived the latter of any initiative. But was not this a matter, a precaution, a prohibition based on a simplifying philosophy, against what would otherwise have been an intolerable evil? Certain aphorisms, which you find among the moralists of all the Coloured countries, lead one to suppose so; and so does observation of other countries, belonging to our own race, where social discipline has managed to maintain itself by means less rough and ready.

The more you study all these non-White societies, the more inevitably, in fact, you are convinced that the evolution of Christianity in Europe has really achieved a masterpiece of humanity in the modern White woman.

While, if we turn to Asia, we find that sex, that wonderful, but terrible force, has been tamed there only by the suppression of any spontaneity in the woman, on the other hand, in the immense area of Africa—Oceania, ***wherever femininity manifests itself freely***, we find that the Coloured woman is still more opposite to the White woman; for she is frankly physical, frankly ***animal***.

I met a middle-aged French engineer in Ethiopia. He went there very young, and he fell in love with the daughter of the chief of a Somali tribe. After a good deal of difficulty, he obtained her in marriage; and the ceremony was celebrated in accordance with local custom, which I shall endeavour to explain as decently as possible.

A caravan of camels, accompanied by musicians, brought the girl to her betrothed's house with great pomp. Then, in the presence of qualified witnesses, a matron proceeded to undertake a regular surgical operation. For, at the time of their puberty, Somali girls are endowed by human prudence with a guarantee much stronger than the virginity contemplated by the Creator. They are actually ***sewn up***; and the stitches are removed only at the very moment of marriage. It is, in fact, essential that the liberation thus effected should be at once complemented by conjugal initiation: otherwise an inconvenient scar would form.

I need not emphasise how odiously shocking is this sewing-up according to our ideas; for obviously it cannot be practised among these nomads with the delicate technique of Western surgery. If it is required, as it is said to be, by the necessity for curbing extremely strong sensual instincts, in any case its cruelty may reasonably disgust any European. This was what happened to the hero of my story. The physical beauty of the girl, who was positively statuesque, had hitherto charmed him. But this bloody operation proved too much for his nerves, and, instead of doing his duty bravely, as a Somali would do, he fainted. The contempt and wrath of his relatives-in-law were extreme. But finally all went well, and the future presumably rewarded the engineer; for he had several children by his African wife.

There are any number of tribes which impose ***excision*** on their little girls as another antidote to the violence of the senses. But this does not prevent the races of the heart of Africa from surrendering to that potent genius of the flesh—in fact as ardent in the one sex as the other—which inspires their more important nocturnal festivals and their most frankly realistic dances. There is no denying that Black humanity possesses a sometimes irresistible faculty for celebrating the joy of life and utilising the most carnal gifts of Nature.

The rhythm of Negro music was born in the jungle, where, to this very day, whole assemblies intoxicate themselves by obeying, just like the vegetable and animal worlds, that inexplicable, worldwide desire which serves the purposes of reproduction. This music, so truly cosmopolitan in its savagery, has won the enthusiasm of some civilised people. Has it not created those jazz tunes—so properly baptised "hot"—which all over the world bring our lost gaiety to life again, just as the spices in colonial curry tickle jaded palates?

Transformed though they may be by several centuries of slavery, the Blacks of the West Indies have retained this sensualism which was so strong in their African ancestors. They surrender themselves to it once more, whenever they escape from the necessity for behaving themselves which the Whites have taught them. I recall having had a vivid impression of this fact a score of times in native dance-halls which I visited from the Guianas by way of Panama to Guadeloupe.

On all these occasions, both the violence and the ***inevitability*** of the impulse felt by the dancers struck me as equally characteristic. Any idea of sin was wiped out of their minds. There remained simply a kind of frenzy, exactly comparable with the intoxication induced by wine. Men and women alike shared it; and the musicians, confined to their dais, stamping and shuddering amid their violins and their big drums, seemed to be suffering because they could not surrender themselves, too, to this release of a magnetic force.

The Black women, swaying in the midst of the whirling men, looked as though they were charged with a regular current of electricity. I can never forget the extraordinary sense of disturbance which one of them, though she was very ugly and all in rags, conveyed to me in a wretched working-class dance-hall in Curacao.

She suddenly came towards me with outstretched arms. She took hold of me forcibly, and I was absolutely compelled to dance a few turns with her. Well, mere contact with this hideous creature—whom I need hardly say I should never have admitted to any further familiarity—transmitted to me the most definitely sexual suggestion of desire. When I escaped from her embrace, which made me sick, I could not help recalling charmers in very different lands, and being desperately sorry that I had not one of them within reach at that very moment.

VIII

Among the numerous examples of White men living with Coloured women in the colonies with whom I have had opportunity of being on friendly terms, I bear in mind particularly a young French official stationed at Diego-Suarez. In that superb southern setting he occupied a villa, plain but pleasant, overlooking the bay, which is as grandiose as that of Rio de Janeiro. The mistress of the house was a pretty little Huva girl with a light olive complexion, whose slanting eyes betrayed her remote Malay origin.

My friend and host was tireless on the subject of the virtues and the charms of his companion. He declared that he was absolutely enchanted with her, and that he prized her high above the girls of his native Languedoc, one of whom, I believe, had refused to marry him. According to his explicit statement, it was ***because she belonged to a different race*** that the Huva girl delighted him so much.

With an enthusiasm which was all the more convincing because he could present himself as a case in point, he kept on, in season and out of season, singing the praises of Coloured women. They were infinitely more charming, more understanding, more sensual, and altogether more delectable from the man's point of view than White women. White women, on the contrary, were selfish, pig-headed, frigid, unintelligent and, in addition, utterly incapable of sincerity. Once you had tasted exotic love, according to this colonial, you could never find happiness in marriage at home.

Let me add at once that, two years later, I met this good fellow again in France. He had fallen ill and requested a transfer to a less trying climate, on our fine Mediterranean coast. He was engaged to a girl in Montpellier. He proceeded to marry her, and I imagine that he stopped inveighing against White women. Naturally, I asked him what had become of his nice little ***ramatu***. With some embarrassment. he told me that he had discovered that she was betraying him with his ***bouté***, his Madagascar boy, and also that she was helping herself to sixty per cent of the housekeeping expenses.

"That's the worst of these women ***who don't belong to our own race***," he summed up sadly. "We think they're in love with us because they're such clever liars. They notice what we like, and they conform to all our whims, just like slaves or monkeys. But in fact they never really surrender themselves to us; and we can never have anything in common with them, apart from the money they get out of us. . . ." After being too much of an optimist, doubtless he had become too much of a pessimist, and he was hardly fair. In plenty of episodes of colonisation, the perfectly sincere affection of a native girl saved the life of a White man, or made his fortune. The girl Marina by whom Hernán Cortés had a son, and who helped him so greatly in his conquest of Mexico, found rivals all over Africa and all over Asia.

But it is not that great mystery, the possibility of complete love between races, upon which I wish to touch here. The Huva girl at Diego-Suarez was no heroine. On the contrary, she represented the generality of her sisters, the "little wives" of colonials, such as you find in Indo-China, in the East Indies, in Guinea or in Rhodesia.

What struck me about her was the, so to speak, mechanical astuteness of her ways and her words. Always smiling and docile, she approved of everything her lover did, anticipated his smallest wishes, and made grovelling excuses if something she had happened to overlook irritated her White master. In short, she modelled herself on what he wanted with a passive adaptability of which only the ***mimicry*** of certain insects can convey any idea.

She was, indeed, extraordinarily ***passive***. Or, at least, she was on the outside; for, in secret, she knew how to take care of both her present and her future. The daughter

of any number of generations subject to masculine supremacy,[1] she possessed a limitless capacity for ***adapting herself***. It was precisely in this way that she had long given the young Frenchman an illusion of matchless happiness.

In fact, like most men, what he liked above all was being obeyed, pampered, flattered. Besides, despite his alleged aversion from the European Eve, despite his enthusiasm for the exotic, what he, too, liked was what his ancestors had found fine and right.

In the villa where he had made his home a few Madagascar hangings did not suffice to alter the profoundly European character of every room. Nor would the girl whom he had chosen as a local curiosity, an extra piece of furniture, have remained in it if she had failed to possess precisely her gift for adaptation, for servile imitation. She dressed, did her hair, painted and powdered to make herself look like a White woman. Her master of the moment scolded her severely whenever she forgot or bungled any part of our ritual of proper feminine behaviour—which she had learned during earlier association with other White men.

In short, ***this colonial had never stopped preferring the aesthetics of White women***. His Huva girl pleased him only in so far as she managed to mimic these aesthetics. On the other hand, unquestionably it was solely by way of bowing to the will of the man concerned that this daughter of Oceania denied her own race. If she had been completely independent, she would never have copied White women.

I have been familiar, as I have already mentioned, with quite a number of more or less lasting associations thus formed in the colonies between Yellow, Brown or Black women and Dutchmen, Englishmen, Americans and Germans. In all these associations, invariably the terms were these: ***the Coloured woman***, ***to the best of her ability***, ***imitated the dress***, ***the speech***, ***the personality of a White woman***; and she did so in order to meet the wishes, avowed or unconscious, of the man concerned.

I am aware that there are some White men who really de-civilise themselves and become completely assimilated with the life of the desert, the tropical islands or the jungle. Such men, one must assume, sincerely seek to escape their origins, their race, above all in their sexual relations. But they remain exceptions, without any influence upon the major laws of ethnography.

Any other colonials or residents in Coloured countries may believe, with all the honesty in the world, that they have renounced the idea of woman as it is cherished by White, Christian civilisation. They may, in all sincerity, sing the praises of the Yellow woman, daughter of centuries of Brahmanism or Buddhism, or the Black woman, daughter of centuries of fetishism. But, in fact, subconsciously they demand that their native mistresses should imitate White woman: their ineffaceable ideal; and what they love in the Coloured woman is the reflection of their sole idol.

Almost all these pioneers, these expatriates to tropical latitudes, set out after an unhappy love-affair in Europe. It happened because, whether they were soldiers or sailors, planters or professionals, despite all their courage, all their knowledge of their jobs, they lacked one essential attribute: capacity to create understanding, union, happiness with a woman, as we Westerners understand the meaning of the word "woman."

Even though they desired her, even though they admired her, even though they worshipped her, they always clashed with that White woman whom our civilisation

[1] The Huvas used to have queens and practised matriarchy. But, in fact, the men were always paramount among them, just as they were throughout Malaya.

has endowed with initiative, with liberty. She struck them as an enigma, absurd and exasperating. It was for that reason, indeed, that they preferred to go abroad.

I have often listened, with all the deference due to their years and their troubles, to the passionate confidences of White men settled in Madagascar or the East Indies, Tahiti or the West Indies. It was always the same story. One man's White fiancée had jilted him just before the wedding, for no reason that he could see. Another man's wife had suddenly "betrayed" him and run away with somebody else.

After some such disillusionment, after a jilting or a divorce or two, he had taken refuge in those lands of mirage lauded by poets. Like one of Pierre Loti's heroes, he had sought consolation and revenge with a woman of the wilds. For that matter, as a rule, he was quite satisfied. The Coloured woman shared his bed and kept house for him. She was plastic, she was patient. She soon got to know the whole range of his habits. She might amuse herself with the servants; but, in the presence of the tyrant, fear or mercenary motives always kept her good-humoured.

A temperament too nervous or too exhausted prevented the White man from harmonising with a partner belonging to our race. Some physical or intellectual incapacity, much to be pitied, doomed him to perpetual frustration so far as White women were concerned.

On the other hand, his exotic "little wife," in adapting herself to the White man's unavowed regrets, in bowing to his will, ***was sharing in that great revolution*** which we are studying. She was transforming herself, according to her artistic capacity, into either a caricature of the White woman or a subtly finished double of the White woman; and she was accomplishing this paradox ***because the man concerned, wanted her to do so***.

IX

Coloured women who imitate White women all undergo, in greater or lesser degree, a struggle between two conflicting personalities within themselves. I have had opportunity of studying several Coloured women who were especially tormented by such a struggle.

In Pekin, in particular, a friend took me one afternoon to an aristocratic house in the Tartar city. Such houses, like those in the Faubourg Saint-Germain in Paris, lie hidden in the midst of courtyards and gardens. On the outside they present to the streets of Pekin, full of dirt and beggars, nothing but a long grey wall and a door painted red and studded with well-polished brass nails.

We went through several rectangular buildings, only one story high and with immense horned roofs. All the rooms in them contained the most remarkable bric-à-brac of priceless Chinese antiques and European sheer trash. Wonderful lacquered chests, gold and silk screens, beautiful vases and show-cases of jade and ivory stood side by side with Italian coloured plaster-casts, horrible wardrobes with plate-glass fronts, and wicker rocking-chairs.

The owner of all this, a Manchu noble of about fifty, clad in a robe, had welcomed us and was showing us round with a smiling politeness which doubtless masked his deep dislike of foreigners. All at once he came to a halt, looking as though he regretted his courtesy. For the moment, we felt embarrassed. We had surprised a whole group of women, whose variety was no less expressive than that of the furniture.

Just as might happen in one of our own aristocratic families, here were assembled, sewing and talking, representatives of three generations. But for the servants, they were all Manchu women, daughters of that northern race which dominated China in

the days of the Empire. Accordingly, even the dowagers' feet were not mutilated. The customs of this aristocracy always accorded women relative respect. Court intrigues were not inspired by the masculine spirit; and, as everybody knows, there were Empresses whose power was absolute.

What we saw was, first, Yellow old ladies, in heavy and very flowing robes, with lined, hard faces, looking as though they were already dead. Then there were others younger, better-looking, but with expressions of supercilious dignity. They were slightly made-up, more or less in European style. Long, tight dresses with high collars and short sleeves, disclosing embroidered slips, clung like cassocks to their rather rigid figures. Finally, there were girls in their 'teens, all wearing blouses and short skirts just like European school-girls.

The oldest and the youngest generations fled at the sight of us. At our host's express request, the women belonging to the generation in between stayed behind. They spoke English, but in my presence they uttered nothing but monosyllables, marked by very natural shyness or reserve. Nevertheless I acquired a preliminary impression that they were living in a state of mental stress, which was aggravated by meeting a European.

That time I did not press matters. I was rewarded by a second meeting. These prim princesses came to a dance at the Grand Hotel in Pekin, a French establishment which does honour to our faculty for making ourselves at home abroad. They did not go so far as to dance, as did plenty of Chinese girls belonging to the Republican middle-class. But they watched the dancing with interest; and the spectacle and the atmosphere of it tended to make them the more Europeanised.

Then, thanks to a skilled interpreter, Albert Nachbaur the journalist, unhappily since dead, I was able to realise much more clearly how painful was the state of uncertainty of such ladies belonging to the Manchu nobility, who were torn between one world which, though out-of-date, still imprisoned them, and another world as yet but half-formed.

Now aged about thirty, these princesses had been married twelve or fifteen years earlier, more or less in accordance with the usages traditional in Pekin ever since the foundation of the Empire. These usages are admirably summed up in the following precept from the ***Li-Kee***: "Marriage is a union of two families for the service of the shrines of ancestors (before all else) and for the continuity of generations."

It will be observed that nothing whatever is said about the suitability of the young couple, or even about their existence as individuals. The only thing that mattered was equality in rank and wealth, together with an underlying idea which was solely religious.

Specialists in marriage undertook to provide these poor girls with young princes utterly unknown to them. The same thing happened in Japan and throughout the Far East up to our own times. The bridal pair did not really meet until the eve of their wedding.

Such girls as these, our own contemporaries, might perhaps owe a slight advantage to Western ideas, which were already beginning to penetrate into the minds of the men of their race. Their future companions and masters wanted to have an opportunity of judging their fiancées for themselves before any definite engagement. Henceforth, owing to ***masculine initiative***, it was arranged that photographs should be exchanged and that the pair should see one another at an "accidental" meeting in a pagoda or a public garden. Then, if the youths of whom they caught a glimpse struck the princesses as too unpleasing, they might have the immense audacity to beg their

Most August Parents to find them husbands less abominable. But the hereditary spirit of resignation was so deeply rooted in them that, if there were any protest of this kind, it was much more likely to come from the men, when they did not like the looks of their promised brides.

Exactly like their ancestors, these brides of only the other day were adorned with magnificent rose-red robes, and laden with heavy ancestral jewels. Then they took their seats in the classical carrying-chairs. This carrying-chair was an entirely closed box, a chest without light or air, with the result that cases of heart attack, due as much to asphyxia as to fright, were common. This nuptial coffin was followed by eight hundred coolies, carrying four hundred cases of presents in a procession half a mile long.

Once in the bosom of their husbands' families, after marriage rites which were positively humiliating for them, the brides found themselves the slaves not so much of their husbands as of their mothers-in-law. These mothers-in-law were petrified dowagers such as those of whom I had caught a glimpse. They were hardened by a lifetime of similar slavery, and intoxicated with the sudden authority which old age conferred upon them. These despotic suzerains were bound to take a delight in revenging themselves on their daughters-in-law for their own long obedience. The lessons which they taught them, in the privacy of palaces whose walls shut them in like prisons, could not fail to be cruel.

For these recluses of our own time, the situation was aggravated by the fact that the Imperial Court had disappeared since 1911. Before that, it provided opportunity for going out; it was a centre of interest. But now the Mandarins and their families held aloof from the new government, which in any case had transferred the capital to Nanking. A mob of the lower orders swarmed freely in the open spaces and the labyrinthine lanes of the Forbidden City and the Summer Residence. And what a mob, those Chinese lower classes! The most democratic of Westerners would feel irresistibly saddened and sickened by the sight of such animals in human form spitting sunflower-seeds on the staircases of the Supreme Concord, which recalls the Louvre, and the humped-backed Marble Bridge, which, ***mutatis mutandis,*** suggests Versailles.

The fate of these brides was therefore that of impenitent monarchists, of é***migrés*** who stayed where they were. The past claimed and suffocated these princesses without an Emperor. Imagine the dreariness of paying calls, for the purpose of exchanging laments and hopes, upon the families of other glorious relics of the old nobility: mandarins out of jobs, ex-chamberlains who persisted in wearing among themselves their old ceremonial costumes, which were prohibited in public!

Here, too, as everywhere else in such cases, the lapse of State largesse upset family budgets. Incomes shrank, and poverty seemed to loom in the future. Fear of the Communist armies haunted these feudalists.

But, in the midst of all this embarrassment and anxiety, the "new ideas" went on influencing ***the masculine element***. The brothers of princesses went to be educated at the universities of Japan, the United States, Great Britain and France. They came back transformed into business men or anarchists, and in either case into detractors of the whole mental code of their ancestors. Sometimes they had even married White women. They accustomed their sisters to sharing their scandalous opinions and reading European novels, in which women play such an active role.

The husbands themselves, even if they never left Pekin, attended social gatherings in the Legation quarter and became used to the ways, and the freedom, of the Whites. Their concubines, if they had any, or the charming sing-song girls of Shensi-Hsiang,

taught them the charm of clinging, low-cut dresses. They came to feel that their own sons and daughters required a new kind of upbringing.

In short, ***the men led the way***, and their feminine entourage received an impulse from them. This was bound to be the case. But it is only to be expected that, in the next generation, the impulse thus given will extend further than the men intended and start a movement really personal to the women.

The daughters or nieces of my Pekin princesses of thirty, the girls who will be twenty in 1940, will pilot airplanes, flirt without asking anybody's leave, and refuse to entertain the idea of maternity until after a trial-trip and a divorce or two. They will dress like Broadway flappers, and they will not be wrong in thinking that the way in which they most resemble White women is in their determination to be intellectually independent.

At the rate they are going, they will by then have gained such independence. But, in their aristocracy as in every other Coloured ***élite***, ***the origin of the revolution will have been all-powerful man***.

X

I retain a particularly vivid memory of the newspaper-stalls in the great Japanese cities.

Kobe extends so far lengthwise that even the express trains which run through it stop at three stations, one after the other; and Tokio, the third largest city in the world, will soon be able to claim five million inhabitants. It has any number of cinema halls. Sumptuous magazines in colour, printed with all the perfection which the Japanese display in every kind of artistic work, advertise the films on show.

It was these fine periodicals which stood out most prominently on the motley stalls in the Ginza and Moto-Machi. Japanese urchins, as mischievous as those of Europe, stared greedily at the portraits which adorned the covers. Sometimes the portrait was that of one of our "stars" belonging to the White race; for in Japan the cinema presents, above all, American, British, German and French films. Then the portrait might show a pink and white face, light blue eyes under lashes brushed with mascara, red lips half-parted for a last kiss, a graceful bare shoulder emphasised by waves of golden hair: in short, Lilian Harvey or Marlene Dietrich.

As models, these paragons of White beauty seemed to interest adult Japanese, men and women, no less keenly than the street-arabs. But often the "star" displayed for public admiration was a Japanese girl.

Japan possesses quite a number of film studios, and the national film industry, which is developing rapidly, already shows considerable competence. On occasion, its producers make use of the splendid material provided by the past history of the Empire of the Rising Sun. Romances of Court ladies and Samurai, and semi-legendary epics such as that of the Forty-seven Ronins, offer a repertory which it would be impossible to neglect altogether. Nevertheless, such subjects make up a small proportion by comparison with modern films.

So what I saw presented on the newspaper stalls for the edification of her younger sisters was by no means the traditional O-Kiku, "Madam Chrysanthemum," with her hair meticulously dressed to show whether she was maid, wife or widow; her multiple silk robes, one on top of the other, with only the least conspicuous left visible by modesty; her sash, the famous ***obi***, tied at the back in a bow like a hump; and, above all, her utterly impassive face, in which the narrow slits of her slanting eyes absolutely forbade any Westerner to catch a glimpse of her soul.

On the contrary, what these portraits glorified was, almost exclusively, Westernised Japanese girls. They were posed in entirely European settings; and they wore either coats, skirts and silk stockings, or low-cut evening frocks, in accordance with our style.

The photographer had skilfully illuminated them, and then the heliograver had coloured them, in such a way that their skin barely betrayed its pigmentation by a few gleams of amber or ivory. A favourable light, or a touch-up, attenuated the Asiatic prominence of their cheek-bones. As for the shape of their eyes, aesthetic surgery had doubtless helped by a cunning use of the scalpel. Make-up of the eyebrows completed the effect. On either side of a pointed nose, which itself denied the racial flat form, big, innocent eyes were thus cured of any trace of slant.

In short, these little Nipponese "stars" simulated the kind of beauty most opposite to their native style. They imitated the blonde heroines of the Californian cinema. These daughters of a xenophobe race were eager to become pseudo-White women.

To tell the truth, the result was far from perfect, at least in the eyes of an observer from the other side of the world. Now that they had gone in for imitation, these Japanese girls of the screen struck me as having lost their most essential charm. Instead of that ceremoniousness, so decorous, so obsequious, which once turned the humblest ***geisha*** into a rather mysterious "great lady," what they particularly affected was our "bad style." Some of them planted themselves with their hands on their hips—bearing in mind, I suppose, Mistinguett or Clara Bow. In addition, they winked, or rather they leered, from under a fringe of black hair cut "dog-style." Nothing, of course, could suit them less.

But what had driven these poor girls to adopt this disguise, which was so contrary to their native genius? Must it not have been a desire, almost ***a command on the part of their public***?

In China, on the other side of the Yellow Sea, other film-studios similarly put before the camera other little creatures disguised in the same way, in response to an identical demand on the part of Chinese audiences. In the fine stationers-shops in Nanking and Canton I was able to admire any number of portraits of Shanghai actresses masquerading as near-Western women.

But, to return to Japan, I found photographs of ***imitation-White women***, much more crude or less sophisticated, sometimes even absurdly comical, at the entrances to all the ***Yoshivaras*** which I had opportunity of visiting.

The ***Yoshivara,*** I need hardly say, is the district in Japanese cities dedicated to mercenary love. According to the old ideas of the Japanese people, who have perhaps lost in high-mindedness from their gain in industrialisation, it used to be the scene not so much of debauchery as ceremonial, innocent amusement. The courtesans were, before all else, hostesses. You went to the ***Yoshivara*** to dine, in a friendly, almost a domestic, atmosphere. You went there to forget your troubles in the midst of singing-girls and dancing girls whose ways were refined. To obtain what is conventionally called their favours, a very special request and certain courteous preliminaries were essential. It was only where lower-class establishments were concerned that fanciers could stroll along the street—where, for that matter, the utmost decorum prevailed—and pick and choose their companions of a night from outside. The girls belonging to these establishments displayed themselves behind a wooden grating.

To-day, the front of every ***Yoshivara*** exhibits a long panel protected by glass and lit by electricity. In it are shown appetising coloured pictures of the ***geishas*** available, just as pictures of actresses are shown outside our theatres. Clients study them before

they enter. I must admit that, in such panels, many a portrait wears the kimono, which, even according to our way of thinking, seems the appropriate professional costume. But the photographs in the most prominent positions, those of the "stars" of the establishment, show girls in evening dress in Western style. In all cases, moreover, whichever costume is worn, the faces, the hair-dressing, the poses unanimously imitate the unashamed artifice of the White beauty.

Fled for ever, or at least in full retreat, is the plaster-cast face, beneath hair tied with big bows, which used to be the mark of the courtesan in the old Empire. In her place, ambiguous, androgynous tom-boys, such as I saw in photographs by the hundred in Tokio, Yokohama and elsewhere, pick up their short skirts in the most vulgar way to show their bare legs, with a saucy shamelessness which would have shocked their predecessors.

Inside the ***Yoshivara***, however, you still find the ***geisha*** with her classical costume and, particularly in the provinces, her classical temperament. Very young in years, infinitely meek and shy through age-long self-effacement in the presence of men, she simply laughs like a child once you have put her at her ease.

In Mukden, a Japanese friend of mine, formerly secretary at the Paris embassy, invited me to dinner in a ***Yoshivara***. He succeeded in creating an atmosphere of ease and enjoyment which was perfectly innocent. Around us on the ***tatami*** squatted half a dozen girls from fifteen to eighteen. With wonderful deftness, they served us rather disconcerting specimens of native cooking. Then, to the accompaniment of the shrill strains of the ***shamisen***, they performed for my benefit their old dances, stately as our minuets.

But, after that, they asked me to teach them our modern dances. A gramophone was brought into the room with its sliding paper panels. Records of rather out-of-date waltzes and tangos were put on. In my stocking-feet—as one must be in every Japanese house—I started teaching my charming pupils what I knew about modern dancing. I found that they had a much better gift for it than I should have expected. In a few steps they slipped into the rhythm. It was they who led me; and I felt far from sure whether this was their first experiment.

If they really still needed a lesson, this was far from being the case with the "taxi-girls," to whom I have already referred. I saw these employees of dance-halls, copied from the American model, on the job not only in Kobe, Shanghai and all the other important cities in Japan and China, but also from one end to the other of the Far East, from tropical to snowy climes.

They were posted around the room ready to act as partners for anybody who took a ticket for a dance. At Dairen they were Koreans, at Bangkok they were Siamese. Their obvious ambition, or rather the role which was imposed on them, was to mimic, to the best of their ability, the make-up, the ways, the brazenness of the worst type of White woman. I am bound to say, to the credit of all these Asiatic girls, that very few of them really managed to get rid of their traditional modesty and docility. They were going against their whole heredity in trying to turn themselves into emancipated "vamps."

The spot in the world where I received the most intense impression of this immense effort to emulate, to imitate White women was the big Santa Anna cabaret in a suburb of Manila. In accordance with the American rule, this enormous hall was divided into two dance-floors, one of them reserved for White men and White women. But on the other floor, where curiosity drew me as soon as I entered the place, Coloured women who had come to the Philippines from all over Asia and America were dancing—on the ticket system—with White men, mulattoes and Yellow men.

All these Coloured women clearly had but one ideal, which was all the rage: to look like White women. Some of them achieved nothing but a sickening caricature. But others, above all the half-breed girls, sometimes created the disturbing effect of a regular double. Two or three of them were extraordinary—more White, more civilised, than real White women.

XI

In regions where the Coloured race is mostly Black, in South-West Asia, West and South Africa, and the American continent as far north as Chicago, the same worldwide tendency transforms film and variety actresses, women of easy virtue of all classes, wealthy women and shop-girls, into more or less successful fakes of White women. This applies equally whether the women concerned are pure Negresses, or brown or olive quadroons whom half-breeding has already helped on the way to Whiteness.

Wherever the unhappy Negro race has been scattered in the course of its tragic history and has managed to survive slavery and claim some degree of comfort from life, in New York's Harlem and in Atlantic City, in Port-au-Prince and in Bahia, in Dakar and in Cairo, there you will find beauty-parlours whose precise purpose is to make Blacks White. I could name any number whose sign reads: "A moment of happiness! Come and make your dream true!" or some such metaphor.

Apart from permanent waving of the hair, which comes first of all, these beauty-parlours, with the aid of appropriate creams and skilfully tinted powders, work a positive miracle for their customers; but unhappily it is not a lasting one. An unquestionable Negress goes in. She comes out beautifully lightened, with a delightfully pink complexion for which no real White woman could hope. But alas, its thin layer soon peels and dissolves with perspiration. It was but a fleeting joy for the poor coquette.

As far back as 1930, in ***Un œil neuf sur l'Amérique***, M. Paul Achard wrote: "There is a Negress in Harlem who, after years of research, discovered a substance capable of making woolly hair lie flat. She has smoothed out the mops of more than one hundred thousand Negresses, and made several million dollars."

In connection with the Harlem night-resorts, the same observer adds; "In the revues which are staged at the 'Cotton Club' or the 'Paradise,' in the beams of the spotlights you may see girls with very white bodies and long, shapely legs. The foreigner is astounded to be told that they are Negresses, in the American sense of the word. Sometimes, to make the deception more complete, the art of the manicurist has traced on their shining finger-nails, in strong varnish, the place of those half-moons which are never, never to be seen naturally in any human being with a drop of Black blood in his or her veins."

In Harlem too, as in all the great Black cities, fancy-dress dances are common, at which Coloured people, meeting among themselves, disguise themselves as pseudo-White women or near-White men.

For, in the Black race, this affectation extends to men as well as women. I have scarcely ever entered a private house inhabited by Blacks, whether it was in Africa, in Madagascar, in Guiana or in the United States, without being struck by the same peculiarity about framed portraits of my hosts hanging on the walls. The painter or the photographer had handled his lighting effects in such a way that all their faces looked lighter than they naturally were. Often, but for the shape of the skull and the cheek-bones, you might take one of these portraits for that of a real White, slightly tanned by the sun.

It is a very innocent dodge, and indeed a very affecting one, and I should feel ashamed to make fun of it. In the days of servitude, the desperate longing to escape their degrading Blackness, to be re-born as White as their masters, inspired among the slaves many a prayer, many a mystery of secret cults. You find another trace of this obsession in the odd adornment of the Voodoo priest in the West Indies. Naturally it has also long been one of his main concerns, one of his best means of obtaining dupes or victims, for the medicine-man of every part of Africa.

Since the cruel days of the slave trade, how many wretched Blacks must have taken dreadful drugs, or undergone the most frightful voluntary tortures, in the hope that their accursed pigment would at least pale!

In Chicago, in New Orleans and above all in Harlem, I have heard Negroes, Negresses and even charming half-breed girls discuss the efficacy of a certain Haitian seed, the ***roary***. It was said to be "fetish": endowed with magical and even maleficent power. It was clearly a poison. But it was also claimed to be capable of accomplishing a total transformation in the organisms of the sons and daughters of Ham, and changing their skins from Black to White. This miracle, it was alleged, had actually occurred, notably in the case of a Haitian, who happened to be very strong. The ***roary*** had made him very ill; but henceforth he was White! It was even said that he was on show in the United States, and that scientists were studying his skin.

Whether it was pure fable, or a distorted version of the case of some biological freak, this rumour greatly excited the wealthy girls of Striver's Row, whose coffee-and-milk complexions disqualified them in Fifth Avenue, not far away. Any number of them would unquestionably have been ready to spend all their fortunes for the sake of changing their skin, if fear of dying from swallowing some of these seeds had not held them back. For I also heard it said that some Southern Blacks had obtained the ***roary*** from Haiti and tried the experiment, that they had died from poisoning, and that the American police were trying to stop the smuggling of seeds in order to avoid further deaths.

I repeat that, in the eyes of these superstitious descendants of expatriated Africans, the ***roary*** signified not so much a drug as a supernatural influence. As for myself, I shall venture no opinion. If this seed really be inhabited by a god or a devil, far be it from me to blaspheme him. I shall content myself with contributing to the discussion the following personal anecdote.

I had landed at Les Cayes, a little coast town in the magnificent island of Haiti. I had a long and interesting conversation about local customs, secret rites and the disappearance of White women and children, with a friendly, middle-aged half-breed woman who kept an inn there. On her counter, in a box with a glass top, were on sale a number of ***roary*** seeds, fixed on gilt mounts so that they could be worn as amulets. I wanted to buy one; but my hostess gave me one instead, saying that only as a gift would this talisman bring luck. She stuck it—and very firmly, as I thought—in the button-hole of my white jacket. I thanked her, and I re-embarked in a boat to go back to my ship. She was moored in the bay some way offshore, for on this coast the bottom is bad and the currents are strong.

The breeze was moderate when we started. But, as soon as we got outside the little fishing harbour it freshened, and our cockleshell danced on the waves. Hard though the Negroes toiled at the oars, we were driven away from our goal, the big ship which we could see across the waves whose crests drenched us. She was still more than a mile away, and I wondered whether we should ever reach her.

I was not thinking particularly about the little dark-red oval, marked with a black stroke like some mysterious hieroglyphic, which adorned the lapel of my soaked

jacket. Nevertheless, I chanced to notice that it was still there, just at the moment when, after exhausting, almost endless efforts, we finally reached the companion-ladder beside the huge hull of the ship. I had not lost my ***roary***.

One danger now succeeded another for us. Having escaped being sunk on the way, we had to jump from the boat on to a narrow platform over which the sea kept dashing, while at the same time it tossed us up towards Heaven or plunged us a couple of yards down in the trough of the waves.

I have a certain amount of experience of such acrobatics. They demand, above all, a cool head and quick decision. But this tiresome trip had left me depressed. I had a strong presentiment that I was going to be drowned.

It was at this moment that I again found myself fingering the hard, chilly oval of the ***roary***; and the absurd idea came into my head that I should never have accepted this gift. What if it were really maleficent? Would it not paralyse me just as I jumped, or make me miss my hold on the ladder, in order to prevent me, a White man, an unbeliever, from taking it away from Haiti?

I confess that the most ridiculous, the most irrational fit of panic—or perhaps some ancestral instinct—bade me get rid of this strange seed. But, with all my European rationalism in revolt, I simply made sure that it was safely in place. Then I stood up and watched my chance of getting out of the boat.

My first attempt nearly landed me in the water. I balanced myself on one of the Black sailors. From the top of the companion the worthy captain of the steamer was watching my manoeuvres with anxiety. At this moment my good Haitian suddenly gave way under me, screaming like a stuck pig, and I fell on top of him between the seats. An absurd accident had rounded off my bad luck. The kitchen boiler had just automatically discharged its excess of hot water; and we were right underneath. The Negro was badly scalded. I got off with a few splashes.

This jape of Fortune made me at once wrath and light-hearted. I sprang to my feet, I cursed my companion in distress heartily; and, without hesitation or calculation, I gripped the rolling hand-rail of the ladder. Then, with all my troubles at last over, as I climbed the wooden treads ringing beneath me, once more I felt mechanically at my button-hole; and, ***as another presentiment warned me***, I found that the ***roary*** was no longer there.

It had disappeared in my fall. I stopped at once, and shouted to the Haitians in the boat below to look for it. It was bound to be there, in the bottom of the boat. All of them looked for it, before my eyes; and, if they found it, there was no reason why they should not return it to me. To them, although it was "fetish," the red seed was commonplace enough. But I ***knew*** that they would not find it; and they didn't.

XII

I repeat that I shall draw no conclusion from this little adventure of mine as to the virtue of the ***roary*** for Whitening Coloured people. What is unquestionable is ***the worldwide desire for Whiteness*** among them.

This desire is flagrantly obvious all over the world nowadays. Among the more crudely barbarous peoples its awakening is only recent. But among other peoples, whose aristocracy and art have a venerable ancestry, it doubtless goes back to the first appearance of explorers belonging to the White race. Documentary evidence, indeed, leads us to think that ***whiteness***, ***or at least paleness***, ***of people and things has always been regarded by the whole of humanity as a sign of superiority***.

I leave aside the example of the "white elephant" of Siam, Laos and Cambodia. In fact, this sacred animal is salmon-colour, and its name, in the local languages, exactly expresses its tint. Still, it is very much lighter than the normal elephant; it is an albino, and it is on this account that it is reverenced.

Apart from this example, any number of items of custom, ranging from the oceanic islands which were most remote from continental influences to the heart of Africa which was longest isolated, prove an odd unanimity of preference for creatures nearest to white.

In Japan, in the old Gion-Machi district of Kyoto, I was present at a "tea-ceremony." A cup of this drink, of a very turbid, creamy green, is ritually prepared in the presence of the guests by an actress-courtesan, who evidently personifies an ancient ideal of feminine beauty. This ***geisha*** has her face daubed with a paste which whitens her like one of our clowns.

In Sumatra, Java and Borneo, at the Courts of the surviving sultans, little princesses are trained to take part, for hour after hour, in mythological ballets whose movements have been minutely regulated and codified perhaps for the past thousand years. These child dancers, too, unquestionably represent what the most ancient arbiters of the East Indies regarded as supreme perfection. A stiff layer of paint hardens all their features, and makes them look like white lead statues.

When I paid a visit, which I should very much have liked to make a longer one, to the excellent archaeological museum founded by the Dutch at Veltevreden, I was much impressed by the sudden sight of a wooden mask, several centuries old, which was discovered in the island of Bali.

It represented a woman's face, perfectly oval in shape, with an expression smiling but sad. Her eyes were not in the least slanting. This face, sculptured long ago under the Equatorial palms by some unknown genius of the East Indies, was further than ever from evoking the charm of the native beauties because it was painted white. It was simply smudged by Time: otherwise it was ***absolutely white***. It resembled, in the most extraordinary way, what we French call ***La Joconde***. Its almost inhuman harmony was indeed that of da Vinci's ***Monna Lisa***.

Bali is by nature one of the most beautiful spots on earth. I could not be surprised that a great artist should have lived there. The identity, between one side of the world and the other, of the rules laid down for the exaltation of femininity could, again, be justified by logic. But what about that colour?

Still, is it not a fact that a similar artistic standard prevails ***even among the different White races***? From the Mediterranean to the Baltic, popular sentiment has made proverbial the pre-excellence of fair men, of blonde women. Our dark men, our brunettes, all the people of Latin and Central Europe, more or less openly envy the fair complexions of the Nordics, just as the Negroes envy our dark races for being White.

Here we have one of the most mysterious, but also one of the most widespread, reasons for love or hate, for union or rivalry, among human beings. But, though everything goes to show that it is of capital importance, ***its sexual aspect has hitherto hardly been studied at all***.

Neither race, nor individuality, nor sexuality, however, is merely skin-deep. What constitutes "the White woman" goes far beyond simply a question of colour. It embraces a whole cycle of characteristics, some of them physical, others intellectual, social and even religious.

Accordingly, the evolution among Yellow, Brown and Black women with which we are concerned, their imitation of the White woman, must extend to every sphere

within the reach of femininity. In fact, we find that their effort to copy the White woman has already passed the stage simply of making-up their complexions and borrowing fashions in dress. This is the case wherever the imitators are more than mere barbarians.

Nowhere, therefore, can we better appreciate this evolution, this revolution which is in progress, than in those two highly civilised empires of the East: China and Japan. Here minds refined by a great civilisation inevitably grasped the manifold opportunities presented by initiation into a different kind of civilisation: our own.

I glance through the table of contents of the ***Revue Nationale Chinoise***, that excellent review published in French in Shanghai. Its contributors, a galaxy of Asiatic men of letters and Europeans long resident in Asia, achieve in their range of chronicles and notes an inter-racial collaboration so penetrating that the review really seems to give me every month a clue to that apparent confusion, the Chinese world.

I am at once struck by the importance assigned to women in its articles. During the year 1933 alone, I find seven or eight articles devoted to women. One is about fashions, with amusing sketches of Yellow women dressed ***à la Parisienne***. Another is about Chinese girls of to-day: poetesses and novelists, students, dancing-instructresses. A third is about the "feminist movement." A fourth deals with "modern style" marriages and mixed marriages—in other words, the marriage of a Chinese and a White woman.

If you know even a little about what the Chinese woman was like in the classical Confucianist society, you feel immediately that a vast change is taking place. Hitherto, in fact, the Chinese woman, from top to bottom of the population, was nothing more than a silent slave, at least until she reached the age of a grandmother. If girls now count for something, if feminists demand liberty of thought and political rights, then the Great Wall has really fallen down and the whole structure of China is in a state of flux.

"China is evolving," writes Doctor Wai (No. 42, Vol. XI of the ***Revue***). "Our women, passing from one extreme to the other, no longer content themselves simply with the gifts of Dame Nature. They subscribe to beauty-institutes. There they are taught to make the best of their features. At the same time modern dressmakers endeavour, by means of a kind of adaptation of foreign fashions, to emphasise the harmony, the slenderness of their figures.

"Celestial women belonging to the wealthy classes now have a special budget for their toilettes. They constitute a set quite new in China: that of women of fashion. They keep to themselves, they have their own ways and habits. It is they who inspire and lead fashion. Other women copy their clothes and imitate their mannerisms. They are sought out, spoilt and envied at all public functions, of which they constitute the adornment. Since they have nothing else to do except make themselves attractive and no ambition other than to be admired, most of them spend their time studying materials and models which will best suit their complexions and their features and best show off their stately beauty or their piquant charm."

Might we not be reading one of the chroniclers of Pall Mall or the Boulevards in the first half of the Nineteenth Century? For in Europe, too, we have passed through periods when women were less emancipated than they are to-day; and, even though the present emancipation of Chinese women presents no comparison, the tone of our criticism in those days was scarcely less severe than Doctor Wai's courteous censure.

The higher up women are in the social scale, the wider is the reaction which their metamorphosis produces. That poor prostitutes in the ports of Asia, or even a handful of "advanced" girl-students at its universities, should trick themselves out in Western

costumes might be no more than a professional necessity in the one case and an unimportant eccentricity in the other. But the disturbance is much more deep-seated if it has its origin in the ruling caste and affects minds as well as bodies.

In Hong Kong, which is British territory, at tea-dances at the Repulse Bay Hotel—where, thanks to the power of money, Celestials are now allowed to rub shoulders with British—I was not particularly surprised to see the womenfolk of wealthy Chinese merchants from Canton quite Europeanised and as emancipated as European women. In such a White colony, this was the result of an inevitable emulation.

But it struck me as much more significant to find even in the depths of independent China, from Kiangsu to Yunnan and Chihli, "modern women" of the same style.

XIII

Although young Malay princes are now sent to be educated at the universities in Holland, in Java the old sultans still maintain their tradition of Musulman polygamy and the cloistering of women. The fact that I had the privilege of travelling with a French envoy of high diplomatic rank enabled me to visit the harems of some of these potentates.

I recall one of them in particular, a fat man, though he had shapely hands, with fierce eyes in his bloated olive face, who proudly conducted us through the apartments of his sultanas. The palace as a whole, built inside a fortress, reminded me of our exhibition buildings: big hutments adorned with spiral columns, bevelled mirrors, stucco and many-coloured lamps.

The sultanas first sat behind us at a performance of classical dances. Then they had retired to their own commodious apartments. The most essential piece of furniture in these rooms was the shell into which they occasionally spat their quids of betel. The crimson colour of this drug stained their lips as though they had been sucking blood.

Their costume, consisting of trousers and tunics cut very low, cannot have changed much for generations. Nevertheless, European influence was to be recognised in many a detail of individual adornment. For this the sultan's sons were doubtless responsible. Their stories on their return from Batavia or Amsterdam must have aroused curiosity among these ladies, combined with a novel desire to make themselves attractive. But the weight of the past and fear of the old man who remained their supreme master obviously limited them to mere shy hints at innovation.

Sitting on cushions in little groups of half a dozen, the sultanas stared hard at the Dutch and French ladies who were also paying them a visit. They made excited remarks among themselves, accompanied by bursts of irresistible but subdued laughter. It sounded to me like a whole dovecot cooing.

Their childish prattle matched the puerility of their faces to perfection. Whether they were fifteen or fifty, all of them seemed to have remained intellectually infantile. Only a few of them, by their depression, their look of bitter sorrow, reminded me that these native courts, tolerated by the Dutch colonial administration, are still the scene of intrigues worthy of Saint-Simon or Racine, which often end in the use of poison or the Malay ***kriss***.

Here we were observing an aristocracy of Coloured women in full course of transition from their immemorial submission to man to ***the birth of individuality***.

This new state of theirs is itself the result of imitation of White women. But the most remarkable fact is that, as I have already emphasised, it is ***initiated by men***.

During a long voyage in a luxurious Japanese liner, I often had the privilege of conversation with Viscountess D., and I was able to study her respectfully, but closely.

She was a quite young Japanese girl of the highest birth. She and the viscount were on their way to America and Europe on their honeymoon. In Tokio she had bought a trousseau of Western clothes. I never saw her wearing a kimono except on the night of the ***soukiyaki*** dinner, a function traditional on this line of steamers.

First of all, she had had to face the purely aesthetic problem of adapting the ***figure*** of her race to our costume. The lower-class Japanese woman is very short in the legs, and she has no hips worth mentioning, thanks to her ancestors' habit of squatting on mats. Even Japanese women belonging to the aristocracy still show pronounced signs of this ancient custom. Nevertheless they, like the heroine of Claud Farrère's ***La Bataille***, have been sitting in European style for the past fifty years. They do gymnastics and play tennis, and they are making themselves taller and better developed. A few generations more, and they will have renounced altogether the figure dear to Hokusai and identified themselves with the Greek and American canons of feminine grace.

Viscountess D. had achieved quite a fair figure according to our way of thinking. She was slim and not too short, and she had a refined, reserved face, with eyes very slightly slanting and a pale amber complexion. She spoke English perfectly, and French quite passably. If I had met her in France, I should have thought: "She looks rather like a Japanese." But I might certainly have mistaken her for a White woman of exotic type, suffering from liver trouble. In that case, I should have summed her up as a shy girl, who disliked society and had to make a great effort to be agreeable and play her part in it.

In fact, the expression of restraint, almost fear, which I noticed about her was ***one of the most pitiful characteristics of the imitation-White woman***.

The liner was carrying mostly White passengers: English on their way home from the East Indies, Americans on their way home from the Philippines, cosmopolitans from Shanghai. A very good Japanese jazz band played dance-music every evening.

Newly married though he was, the viscount did not deprive himself of the pleasure of dancing with White women. His dinner-jacket suit was well-tailored, and his horn-rimmed spectacles gave his bilious-looking, impassive face an air of refined Semitism.

The viscountess, for her part, danced with White men. But I gathered an immediate impression that she did so against her will and as a matter of duty. I asked her to dance with me. I found that she could dance quite correctly, but that she was trembling all the time. It was exactly like the nervousness of a debutante forced to face presumably hostile judges.

I was filled with admiration for her as I reflected what a miracle of adaptation she was accomplishing—this direct descendant of noble women of Japan who spent their whole lives immured in the grim castles of their husbands, those xenophobe ***daimyos***! She almost managed to make herself mistakable for one of those virtuosos of saucy charm, our White women who have been emancipated for centuries. It really was a miracle. . . .

But I pitied her, too. For her honeymoon in the lands of White races was bound to be quite the opposite of a joy-ride. It was bound to mean for her a perpetual state of embarrassment and alarm.

In the first place, there were her foreign judges, those merciless critics, really White women. What a relief it must be to her when she locked her cabin-door, slipped off her American evening dress which made decency a paradox, and put on her beloved kimono, every fold of which had been fashioned, so to speak, by ancestral wear!

But, even at that moment of relaxation, she must dread the judgment, and condemnation, of an even more important censor: her own husband, the young viscount with his horn-rimmed spectacles.

It was to please him, to honour him, that she went out of her way to disguise herself as a Western woman. He was both the cause and the object of this whole prodigy of revolution in a woman. But might not he, more exacting even than a European man, come at last to find his little amber wife incapable of rivalling the radiant splendour of the White woman?

I have had opportunity of coming into contact with Siamese, Javanese, Hindu and Malay princesses who were a prey to a similarly tragic private problem, on whose solution their happiness, or even their very lives, depended. They faced its difficulties much more awkwardly.

I exclude certain ladies of the Annamite aristocracy who have had the advantage of a French education, for example the charming, witty Baroness I., married to a Frenchman in Hanoi, and her school-fellow at a convent, who is now the Empress of Annam.

Among the other races of Southern Asia and the East Indies, the women have a much longer way to go.

Despite all the years during which they have lived among Whites, despite all the aptitude which an aristocratic descent confers on them, even such perfect "women of the world" as those I have mentioned remain ***different*** from any White woman.

I am far from saying that they are ***unequal***, if that is to be taken as implying "inferior." I rank them vastly superior to a multitude of White women whose vulgarity, brainlessness and ugliness exclude them from any comparison.

But the venerable human plant from which these Coloured women have flowered has always developed in a direction ***opposite to ours***. That is all race-difference means: something opposite. To-day, however, a new, an extraordinary fate inclines these flowers another way and makes them turn towards ***our*** sun.

Such is ***the anti-racial revolution***, so far as it concerns them. It is a revolution which is upsetting still more, and in the first place, their husbands, Coloured men.

The tragedy, for these Coloured women is that, whatever miracles they may accomplish, however far they may simulate the White woman, even to the extent of misleading ***us***, the Coloured men will never believe that their women can attain that ideal which our propaganda has revealed to them.

Coloured women may become imitation-White women to the point of being mistaken for White women.

But authentic White women they can obviously never become.

So the desires of their menfolk will turn elsewhere.

CHAPTER XI

THE WHITE WOMAN: OUR GREATEST SIN

I

FOR centuries, despite sometimes deadly feuds amid the churches, the most world-wide and the most potent propaganda was that of Christianity, with all the consolation, all the blessing it was capable of offering mankind in accordance with the inspired wisdom of the Gospel.

Unhappily, however, for about the past fifty years this has ceased to be the case. Vast regions of the globe, still regarded as barbarian or backward, have become the objective, on the part of our old Europe and now grown-up America, of ***a different kind of propaganda***. The authors of this propaganda are either unaware of its results or cynically indifferent to them.

Hence, in my opinion, arises the "depression," said to be economic, but in reality intellectual, from which all the peoples of the White race are suffering at the present time. Hence arises the justification for the alarm-signal which I sound in this book.

A few items of my personal observation, to which any other observer with his eyes open could equally testify, will help us to diagnose the evil.

After a flight of one thousand kilometres, in the course of a splendid seaplane trip along the Mekong river, I "moored" at Thakkek in Laos.

We were setting off again the next day for Birmania. My fine pilot, Lieutenant M., a pioneer of hydroplane routes in Indo-China, and myself happened to be short of certain essential trifles: such things as toothbrushes and razor-blades. We failed to find any at the French post, where a mere handful of our fellow-countrymen lived near a large Laotian village.

Without any real expectation of better luck, but more for the sake of the excursion than anything else, we decided to take a boat across the river, and go and see whether they were any better stocked at Lakhone, another large village under the Siamese flag.

Here we were really at the back of beyond. We had been able to realise its remoteness as we flew over the immense forests and uninhabited wastes which extend on either side of the Mekong beyond the narrow strips of cultivated land along its banks. We felt it still more as we strolled through the narrow streets of Lakhone.

The village consisted almost entirely of huts, in which cattle fraternised with the natives. Nevertheless, a few Malabars had found their way even here: those Jews of the Far East, with their chubby, good-humoured, smiling faces, topped by black Indian caps embroidered with gold. In accordance with their custom, they had opened hybrid establishments: barber-dentists and grocer-washermen. Whatever their signs said, they were prepared to sell anything.

So we explored the sheds of rough planks in which were warehoused a dusty medley of packing-cases and sacks. They were stocked with cotton stuffs of the poorest quality, hardware and glassware of the roughest kind. It was simply a bazaar for barbarians. They did not seem to be familiar with anything else in Lakhone, apart from the coarse tobacco and the areca nuts which grew on the banks of the river. As for the very simple implements of civilised life which we wanted, we could not find them; nor could we find the merest trifle worthy of ranking as a local souvenir.

"Hullo," I cried, all at once, "what's this? Here's luxury; here's our Europe! ***White women***!"

My companion shared my astonishment.

Here in the heart of the backwoods, in the most beggarly of bazaars, I had found a packet of photographs, taken in Berlin—or perhaps in Paris. They were the kind of pictures which seedy pedlars offer to foreigners in the Place de la Concorde.

They were both in black-and-white and in colours: some of them highly realistic, others shrewdly suggestive. I rummaged amid the collection. I passed in review a whole regiment of White women, with rosy cheeks and fair hair, doing their hair in lace-trimmed combinations, and smiling with the roguery that goes with undress; or stark naked, and in this case, business-like and shameless.

It was the most extraordinary thing, this sudden evocation of feminine intimacy, of ***our women***—even though they were represented by prostitutes.

I raised my eyes and glanced at the living Siamese women of Lakhone, as they went in and out of their huts. They, too, were not wearing much more than scanty chemises; but they were of coarse material and shapeless cut.

These Siamese—they were equally women. Among Asiatics, their race, like that of the Laotians on the other side of the great river, is rightly regarded as one of the most arch, affectionate and endearing. I knew this from many confidences from French colonials. I myself had the happiest memory of a stay in Bangkok, where I was the guest of the Court. My respectful conversations with the princesses had taught me to appreciate their very refined charm, and for nothing in the world would I have offended them. I had also seen Siamese dancing-girls, full of native grace, heightened by their training. It was with girls of this category, rather than with the village women of Lakhone, that I should compare the White models of these "artistic" photographs.

All these thoughts passed through my mind. They did little to weaken my impression of a most remarkable contrast.

The White women of these photographs were probably of peasant birth or descent, or at least the daughters of working-class parents, whom the chances of our great cities had promoted to the lower ranks of courtesans. But they could never have resembled such primitives as these poor Siamese countrywomen, with their squat figures, their oily hair, and their childish or animal faces.

Yes, that was the point: they remained quite close to the animal world, like babies before they acquire personality, or like puppies, ugly but droll and touching. Suddenly I felt sorry for them. . . .

On the other hand, these girls of ours, low though they might be in our social scale, had self-conscious, emancipated ***expressions of their own***. They were no ***ladies***, as many princesses in Bangkok, and throughout Asia, certainly are in their own way. But they were ***women***: definitely human beings. This was what had been done for them—without their realising it, no doubt—by the more highly evolved heredity of the White race, by some thousands of years of a religion, a philosophy, and a history, from Socrates and Christ to Luther and Napoleon, based upon exaltation of individuality.

All at once this chance juxtaposition led me to realise the enormous distance, physical and intellectual, which can separate two groups of contemporaries.

I also wondered that, at Lakhone in Siam, there should be customers for such pictures, so remote from the native standard of aesthetics. White men were really too rare in the region to count as buyers.

We asked the vendor whether he had much sale for these photos. When he understood what we were asking, he burst out laughing, nodded vigorously, and rubbed his hands together. Through the world-wide medium of pantomime, he assured us that indeed they were not a bad line of goods. For that matter, would he ever have included them in his stock if there had been no sale, no demand for them?

Who could covet these exotic ikons? The women whom we could see busy about the most elementary household duties—or their men, squatting on the thresholds of their huts? And why did they want them?

The licentious, still less the artistic, character of the photos did not seem to enter into the question. It was rather as evidence of the existence of a distant fairyland, more or less as the effigies of monstrous goddesses, that the inhabitants of Lakhone were prepared to pay through the nose for these nude damsels of the Motzstrasse or the Place Pigalle.

II

What I observed in that backwoods province of Siam applies equally to all the present borderlands of international trade.

Wherever you reach the farthest point to which European or American exports go, wherever these exports really dwindle down to articles of primary necessity or special accessories for aborigines, there similar pictures are also on sale. You find them, I can testify either from my own experience or that of witnesses whom I can trust, in tents or straw-shelters in remotest Africa, in caravans in Central Asia, and in the booths made of boughs where the most uncivilised Kanakas of Oceania do their shopping.

This propaganda, in which the most mysterious charm of all our White society is at one and the same time deified and humiliated, is world-wide to-day.

I have chosen my little adventure at Lakhone in order to emphasise what I mean from the outset. I will now ask the reader to consider other mediums of propagating the same positive idolatry which are infinitely more advanced, precisely because they are apparently irreproachable—at least according to eyes which remain blind to the racial conflict.

It is now about a hundred years since the Whites created a new industry, born, more than any other industry, of competition: ***advertising***, commercial publicity. I may add that Great Britain, the United States and Germany conceived it, exalted it, and carried it to the limit and beyond, before France slowly rallied to such methods.

But, as I remarked at the beginning of this chapter, it is only during the past half-century that White business-advertising has spread outside the metropolitan markets. It extended progressively to the colonies and the independent countries inhabited by the Yellow, Brown and Black races. At the present time it has become, just as European and American exportation has done, absolutely world-wide.

It is not only the railways, the roads, the walls of our own countries which are now adorned, and sometimes defiled, by gigantic advertising-posters. There is scarcely a railway-line, scarcely a cross-roads, scarcely a public square left anywhere in the world which has not been farmed out to some advertising agency. Even in the most remote regions of British India or the Dutch East Indies, in the depths of the Congo or Mongolia, amid the exuberance of tropical landscapes or the barrenness of the steppe, you will see rising in front of you some violently painted surface which adjures you not to overlook one or another of the motor cars, the cigarettes, the oils and the thousand and one household requisites and food products which minister to our comfort.

Nowadays there are such advertisements ***everywhere***. The Chinese peasant sees them on his way home from his rice-field, the nomad Sudanese sees them on his return from hunting in the jungle. The most ascetic bonze or lama cannot get away from them even in his pious meditations.

Now what is the most obvious symbol for us Whites, the strongest, the most appealing, and therefore the one most naturally, most commonly employed by the artists, shrewd psychologists and skilled craftsmen, who put their talents at the service of that modern Maecenas, ***advertising***?

This symbol, ***ninety-five times out of a hundred***, is a picture of what is, in fact, the most attractive, the most inspiring thing known to us: a White woman.

Recall them for yourself, all those beautiful, charming girls, with pink and white complexions, sweet smiles, red lips half-parted over exquisite teeth, and haloes of fluffy curls like a golden mist around them. You can see them at once, evoking earthly perfection and the joy of life, and bearing the name of some London or New York business firm.

For you, of course, they possess no dubious character whatever. You may like some of them better than others. You prefer them because they appeal to an artistic taste which, in your case, is perfectly legitimate—or else they remind you of a girl-relative, a girl-friend, perhaps even a girl unknown to you whom you have seen and admired. Thanks to this, they do their job. These beauties, painted in the middle of an advertisement and reproduced all over the place, gradually get you to think of X.'s cars or Y.'s cigarettes as superior to their competitors. That is all.

The artist who created them, for his part, drew them after the usual art-training, and probably from a living model. But to any artist worthy of the name there is nothing wrong about the nude. It is, in fact, lacking in any sensual significance which it might have for an "outsider": it is a purely professional spectacle. His art, moreover, consists in embellishing, in idealising real forms and making them more refined, more chaste. If, nevertheless, it happens to create an appeal to the senses, this appeal has not been consciously pursued, and it is of the most delicate kind—in our case.

Besides, even if we experience such an appeal, still we are not entirely conscious of it. ***We do not think about it***; for we are people with an old tradition of civilisation, and for a very long time a feeling of restraint, of ***chivalry*** towards women, has been impressed upon us. Here we have that masculine sense of decency which is reputed, not without reason, to be even stronger than the feminine. If anybody said to us: "You like that picture because of its sex-appeal," we should be hurt, we should be offended, and we should rightly reply: "You're talking like a cad."

But the innocent posters in question are, I repeat, shown in identically the same form in every part of the world. Men of all kinds who have eyes to see look at them just as you do, and retain a faithful memory of them stamped on their minds: men of all kinds, whether their skins be Yellow, Brown or Black, including the Pariahs of India and even, now and then, certain conservative cannibals.

Now, these men are not long-civilised in the sense that we are. They are ***beginners in civilisation***, frankly or furtively curious about everything introduced to them by the master-nations. They are primitive men, frankly animal.

In their eyes, the picture which means little or nothing to us becomes definitely sexual. They stare at it, as they doubtless would never dare to stare at a living White women. Behind the innocence of its face, beneath the irreproachable correctness of its clothing, they look for a physical person like the women of their own race. The mere fact of being able to gaze upon these foreign women, so brilliantly, so serenely trium-

phant, is in itself, according to their anti-feminist way of thinking, a scandal as well as a wonder.

Let me quote a more or less paradoxical example. From our point of view, what could be more lacking in any dubious intent than the girl in the long striped dress, who has been chosen to focus, in any number of ways, a camera well known all over the world ? Her whole bearing is modesty itself, and we always see her surrounded by a family so obviously healthy, sporting and affectionate as to exclude any unwholesome idea. Nevertheless, I cannot forget the strange attitude of ecstasy in which I once surprised a young Asiatic in the presence of this prototype of our guardian of hearth and home.

There was nothing vicious, nothing criminal so far as he was concerned either. He was simply acting in obedience to a profound instinct dictated by his heredity and his period. But the European shop in whose window he had stumbled on this simple picture—the lady had not even the attraction of being a life-size poster—was nevertheless responsible for an initiation on his part which was very upsetting.

III

Commercial advertising among the Whites, however, adopts many forms in addition to posters. Magazines, catalogues, circulars, wrappers, labels are illustrated in accordance with the same symbolism of feminine grace. Their multiplication, in every country in the world, mounts up to something startling.

Let me single out drapers' catalogues, which quite naturally present, by means of the most alluring sketches, the "undies" as well as the "ovies" of the White woman's attire. Among us, women pictured in corsets, or damsels exhibiting their lingerie, may at the most be studied with some avidity by schoolboys. But they provoke a very different reaction when they fall into olive or mahogany hands. A Colonial lady told me that she could not keep any fashion catalogues unless she hid them, for they were stolen out of her own drawing-room by her native "boys."

In the West Indies and in Africa I have seen the most respectable Europeanised Blacks, civil servants in office suits and starched collars, carefully preserve the little photos of "Parisian" actresses in bathing suits which they found in packets of cigarettes.

I have seen Blacks proudly pull out of their pockets enamelled cigarette-cases or lighters adorned with elegantly tinted White nudes. These baubles were not, in their eyes, mere playthings. They were a convenient, constant reminder of a human fruit which, if not forbidden, was at least rare in their native clime, and therefore all the more tempting.

If advertising often invokes sex-appeal with a refinement which makes it almost imperceptible, ***decorative art*** in its application to articles for sale is deliberately more frank. In fact, the articles which sell best in these new, outlandish markets are precisely those of crude effect-just like the strong scents "for native taste."

Any number of times, in huts and bungalows all the way from Haiti to Java and the Comorin Islands, I have seen boxes, pots, scent-bottles, etc., invariably adorned with the face of a White woman, more or less alluring, or the whole body of a White woman, more or less undressed. This is, I admit, so customary among our working-class and our peasantry that nobody even pays any attention to it. But ***out there*** it has quite a different significance.

In many cases, to be sure, the almost animal life of the coolie or the ***bouté*** makes it unlikely that he will spend much of his time thinking about creatures so remote, so far out of his reach. Nevertheless, he knows, ***he can see for himself that*** such creatures really do exist.

In other homes less wretched, this evocation—to us quite commonplace—of ***our Idol***, ***Woman,*** is definitely suggestive, in the most direct, in the most potent way—and in the most unwholesome way.

What is one to say, moreover, about the ***non-commercial*** art which we export? By this I mean pictures and statuary which may claim to be the expression of a system of aesthetics wholly divorced from commercialism.

Countries belonging to the Yellow, Brown and Black races have become the dumping-ground of our most mediocre productions in painting and sculpture. Among these productions the feminine nude constitutes a percentage which is strikingly high. All the bacchantes, the nymphs and the odalisques who have spoiled good canvas in the studios of Europe since 1890, and to whom even our provincial art galleries refuse hospitality, hang in all their glory in the princely halls of sultans rajahs and tukyuns. Though they may suffer from anaemia, though their anatomy may be indefensible and their curves contemptible, nevertheless they remain revelations of that miracle: a woman with an absolutely White skin.

Some of these pictures, lording it in all their painful flashiness over the receptions of Far Eastern potentates, shocked me all the more because real European women in low-cut evening dresses sat down innocently underneath them, and thus served as a comparison for the princes and their courts.

I have visited a number of native universities—some of them splendid, some of them pathetic—particularly in China. In them I have admired the application of the students, in their classical robes, but with American spectacles astride their snub noses, as they bent over experiments in physics in laboratories or at their desks over atlases and books. What faith they had in those Western books, translated from English, and sometimes from French!

I have seen some of them reading Rousseau's ***Confessions***, Zola's ***Nana***, de Maupassant's ***Bel Ami***. These three great French authors are very much studied by young Chinese. We cannot blame them for that. Still, I could not help thinking about the text of these works, written with extreme frankness in a strain of sensuality.

We Europeans of to-day regard this simply as a transient literary fashion, now quite out-of-date. While we admire these writers' beauty of language and power of evocation, we consider their conception of morality quite unimportant. Rousseau, Zola, Maupassant, and all the other masters of realism in our pantheon, for their part, naturally did not realise that they would some day have readers belonging, so to speak, to a different kind of humanity, sons of a different type of society, with all its tradition of reserve, all its rigidity of caste.

The fact remains that these authors undress the women of our countries, tear down the bed-curtains, and depict not merely lust, but also vice and degradation, no less mercilessly than they attack political abuses. To us this virile school may possibly have been a blessing. But what an unpleasant intellectual boomerang does this cynicism prove, when it exhibits us, in all the voluptuousness or the ugliness of our nudity, to minds not trained as ours have been to understand everything!

After such reading, how do Yellows, ***still stamped with the imprint of Confucianism***, judge this lewd, adulterous, venal, scandalous world of ours? They judge it to be what I have just called it.

In fact, our world is not simply that and nothing more. But racial misunderstanding magnifies, aggravates and in short completely distorts the traits of one author's courtesan and another author's "kept" man. Badly interpreted in this way, what is merely, so far as we are concerned, a spicy satire on exceptional or reformable immorality becomes in Asia a eulogy, a panegyric of vice.

In the eyes of these readers about whom they never thought, our best, our most famous authors seem to define the White woman as a prostitute or a Messalina. There is, alas, no doubt that French literature sets the pace and beats all records for a frank pornography which constitutes ***a regular racial betrayal***, once you start considering it from the point of view of the Coloured peoples.

So long as I myself was personally ignorant of this situation, which came into existence barely yesterday, I should never have tolerated the idea of a literary censorship. These great realists filled me with enthusiasm when I was a youth, but they did not corrupt me in the least; for I am a European. But now I should at least like to see every one of their infernal, corrosive pages bear this note addressed to the Coloured: "Do not judge us by this testimony."

IV

Alas, it is too late. Our masterpieces of self-education have long since circulated to the other side of the world. By their very genius they convince coteries of Coloured ***intellectuals***. These intellectuals all feel quite sure that they now know all about the private life of the Whites, and all about how to attract White women, how to treat them—how, at a pinch, to maltreat them.

Besides, our printing-presses do not publish nothing but masterpieces, which are at least ennobled by a breath of inspiration such as could not entirely escape even minds very remote from ours.

France, Germany, Spain, Great Britain and the United States also produce any number of books, some tolerated, others clandestine, which aim frankly and crudely at sensual excitement. There is, in particular, a type of literature known as ***sadist***, whose heating capacity varies from that of a subtle spice to that of live coal.

Books of this kind are published for the secret satisfaction of a clientele of Whites who presumably have no innocence left to lose. The tragedy is that the export market also lays hands on them.

Let me record another travel impression. In ***The Road to Shanghai*** I have told the story of one of my visits to Canton, the Marseilles of China, where a Frenchwoman named Margot introduced me to some brothel-keepers. After dining at a restaurant in Chung-Tong, we wound up the evening on board one of the famous "flower-ships" in the Pearl River.

It was simply a barge, with its main deck occupied by reception-rooms with gilded planking, lit by many-coloured lamps. The bedrooms in which clients could spend the night in company with "sing-song girls" were astern, in a superstructure complicated by alley-ways and companion-ladders with sharp turns. These were for the purpose of baffling bad spirits who might otherwise follow their victims to the bedrooms. In China it is believed that demons are both spiritual and material, both powerful and simple-minded.

Being curious by profession, I questioned my hosts about the voluptuous mysteries which are traditionally supposed to be celebrated in such retreats. They smiled, and replied that we Europeans had always attributed our own vices to Asia, whereas in fact we were Asia's expert teachers. Then, as I seemed to think that this was just another example of their ironical politeness, they opened a chest for my benefit. It contained the ship's English library.

It consisted of a whole collection of books printed in Europe and devoted—of all things—to Chinese tortures. These abominably shameless stories all dealt with Yellow lords—Boxer chiefs, cruel Mandarins—capturing White women and torturing them to death with every refinement of obscenity.

Bear in mind that I was in old, independent China, outside the European concessions. They were real Chinese who had read these books and were now showing them to me. Grouped about me, they laughed at my obvious confusion. They tapped their finger-nails on the illustrations, coloured engravings faithfully inspired by the text.

"We should never have thought of things like that," they told me, with infinitely gentle mockery. "But now, thanks to you Europeans, we're learning. . . ."

In Hong Kong, in Shanghai, and on board the river steamers run by various companies which are policed by Whites, the introduction of obscene pictures is forbidden. So the danger is not overlooked by the authorities. But despite the regulations posted up, the examination of travellers is nil, because it is ***in practice impossible***. To realise this you have only to glance at a steerage stuffed with Yellows by the hundred. You might as well look for a needle in a haystack as try to find a few packets of photographs amid this swarm of humanity.

The result is that, in the heart of China—in Sianfu, Chung-King, or Kwei-Yang—you can always find not only such relatively chaste pictures as I myself saw at Lakhone in Siam, but also the most repellent prints such as are sold "under the rose" in Europe.

V

Without any question, the cinema is another medium of propaganda for the sex-appeal of our women in Coloured countries; and it is a medium much more general and effective in its results.

Even in supposedly moral productions, it is perpetually condemned, by a kind of necessity, to present love affairs and suggestive scenes. It is sexual in its very principle. For its benefit, the most attractive girls in the whole White world are chosen, made-up, transformed, trained for the specific purpose of expressing irresistible charm.

The cinema, moreover, gives a simplified presentation, since it must at all costs appeal to an international audience. This presentation is animated, alive, ***unquestionable***. Never has any more universal means of teaching anything been created. What the cinema teaches, above all, is ***adoration of Beauty—of the White woman***.

If producers at Hollywood and elsewhere sometimes spared a thought for the foreign spectators who may see their films at the other side of the world, perhaps they might dissuade their "stars" from adopting certain attitudes; or, at least, they might cut their films for export purposes.[1] This would be wisdom from many points of view. To

[1] I may recall the identical opinion of the American Commissioner Richardson quoted earlier in connection with the Massie case.

begin with, it would save respectable White women resident in the colonies from the risk of outrage, whose genesis is only too obvious.

Let us stick to China, though the same thing applies to the Sudan, the West Indies and the New Hebrides. I found myself one evening in a small town much more remote than Nanking or Canton from modern influences. My good Chinese friends wanted to convince me of their taste for progress. So they took me to the cinema, which was giving its first show, in an old ***yamen***.

In a packed audience, chewing water-melon seeds but already learning to applaud in our fashion, I was the sole representative of my race. On a makeshift, somewhat shaky screen, two films were shown one after the other.

The first was a legendary drama of the Middle Empire, doubtless "shot" in a Shanghai studio. It "featured" warriors in armour and a little princess in a stiff robe, wearing a long pigtail. I found it hard enough to understand the film; for, in accordance with the best style of the Chinese theatre, symbolism was mixed up with definite action. When an actor brandishes a whip in China, it means that he is on horseback. We could hardly be expected to guess that! Still, one thing quite clear to me was the absolutely negative role assigned to the princess. This doll, the personification of shyness, had little or nothing to do with the princes, who fought for honour or whatnot—but certainly not for her!

There was a short interval, during which, without leaving our seats, we were privileged to wipe our faces with napkins dipped in warm water, and then drink the incomparable Chinese tea out of the spouts of steaming pots handed round by attendants.

Then, all at once, I was whisked away to America.

The second film was an American version of Marcel Prévost's novel, ***Les Demi-Vierges***. There were no married women and no adultery in it; and so morality, according to Hollywood's ideas, was safeguarded. But the film showed, with absolute cynicism, the life of huntresses for marriage, badly brought-up, only too wise virgins—life as it may really be lived, for all I know, in certain circles in the United States. At the end, some smacking engagement kisses compensated for the boldness of the scenario.

Three charming actresses, White of course, played the "leads." All three of them delightfully incarnated that blonde angel, lascivious but shrinking, whom the New Yorkers call a "gold-digger." The photography brought out to perfection the enchantment, the brilliancy, the quasi-divine youth of these sporting "demi-virgins." The Californian sun—or "sun" spotlights—played tenderly on their beautiful bodies, poured into fashionable frocks, or still better revealed by evanescent lingerie. There were, in fact, minute analyses of the process of undressing. The producer had taken care of the box-office by showing, above all, slim legs in long silk stockings and dainty "panties," gleaming like flowers. I need not emphasise the frankness of the plot. Though it ended in the triumph of virtue, it conveyed a rather derisory idea of it.

In any case, the mere showing of these daughters of my race, where I was and in such intimate circumstances, would have struck me as painful and scandalous enough.

The local apparatus had no facilities for "talkie" or even for "sound." The place of dialogue and music was therefore taken by a Chinese lecturer sitting on a little platform. He supplied a running commentary, which was obviously necessary to explain matters to the audience seated around me.

This speaker, full of self-importance, undoubtedly explained a great deal more than he himself could understand. For his harangue never stopped. For my part, I could make nothing of it beyond a succession of shouts, modulated rather than articu-

lated. Higher notes in minor key alternated with them, instead of the pause which punctuates our sentences in Europe.

He may have been a mere coolie, back from a job in a Concession, and thereby an assumed expert about White ways. In any case, what he had to say made people laugh. At the most sentimental or dramatic passages of the film, my neighbours gobbled and bent double with laughter as they listened to him. It was obvious that they were making fun of the show. Their hilarity was that of a civilised, superior people in the presence of the eccentricities, the frenzied performances, of a tribe still in a state of utter barbarism.

Undoubtedly the Asiatic orator was emphasising the corruption of the White women and the stupidity of the White men whom they fooled. The atmosphere was one of beatific mirth, intermingled with contempt and xenophobia. A fat man in a mandarin's robe sitting quite near me was positively hiccupping with laughter. He shouted a few words which raised a regular storm of delight. I insisted on knowing what he had said. After much polite hesitation, my hosts translated for me:

"He said that he would never burn 'painted candles' for such madcaps as these White girls—that means he would never marry them—but he wouldn't mind having one of them to stay with him."

I nodded in silence. My instinct to pitch my stool through the screen, by way of interrupting this exhibition which made me ashamed for my race, was mingled with a feeling that my neighbours might soon be stoning me as the representative of a race that dishonoured itself.

Above all, I could feel—and the mandarin's formula convinced me—that, over and above their amusement and contempt, Nature was filling these men with a purely physical desire for the lovely feminine creatures who were moving before their eyes. Little by little, sensuality was getting the upper hand. This was a still worse reaction; and I was distressed to find my impression of it confirmed when the film came to an end and we left the hall.

Jostled amid these boorish provincials of the real China, excitedly discussing the show, I could tell that I was the object of a curiosity which was hostile and, so to speak, jealous. They were doubtless saying to one another: "Here's one of those dogs of Europeans, who have women like that."

In their long black cassocks and their felt boots, with their yellow heads shaven under their caps and their mouths twittering unintelligibly, they seemed as far removed from my type of humanity as the Man in the Moon. They were going home to ***their*** women, Yellow as themselves, still semi-slaves, dressed in heavy robes like the little princess in the film, and often with their feet mutilated in the old style. But they were carrying away with them the novel picture of other women, a hundredfold bolder and cleverer in suggesting their sex.

These foreign devils, these White women, so obviously beautiful even in their eyes—they had seen them in all their intimacy. It was as though a gigantic telescope had enabled them, from their old Asia barely out of its Middle Ages, to peer into the great, gorgeous cities of America, and there penetrate the mysteries of the bathroom and the bedroom amid these Whites whom they had hitherto regarded as gods and goddesses.

VI

I could quote any number of similar instances to bear witness to the infinite variations of the propaganda in question. It is carried on through some mediums which our

ordinary standard of judgment would regard as quite inoffensive, as well as through others which we ourselves would like to outlaw from our unhappily corrupt civilisation.

To sum up, the idea, or the picture, of Woman is bound up with most of the articles which we produce for trade purposes. It is quite natural that the woman concerned should be the White woman of our own race.

She is the most beautiful thing we can imagine. Our artists have drawn their inspiration from her exquisite grace even in the decoration of cathedrals. There is no public building, no park which is not adorned by statues to her. There is no masterpiece of art or literature which is not dedicated to her. There is no merchant who does not take her as the symbol of the superiority of his merchandise.

All this was intended at the outset only for ***our own public***, for the use of the Whites among themselves. There was certainly nothing wrong in it; for it is legitimate to take advantage of a treasure which is your own possession.

But the success of this immense system of publicity has overshot its goal. Advertising enterprise, with its secretly sexual tendency, has become, through a mathematically inevitable development, first colonial and then world-wide.

So to-day the Whites, without realising it, are the salesmen of an absurdly enthusiastic panegyric to Coloured men; and these Coloured men are capable of an unexpected rivalry. The Whites laud, vaunt, idealise and indeed ***make too much of*** their own women, before the eyes of a multitude of men whom they would, of course, refuse with horror to admit to any competition with themselves in love, any share in their own privileges.

They have thus produced a startling state of unrest, a disturbance in which hatred and desire are intermingled, among these Coloured peoples. At the same time, they are awakening these peoples to all the possibilities of modern science. Intellectually, this constitutes a revolution. Materially, its consequences are incalculable.

Still, to help us to foresee its future, let us glance back over its past.

Ever since the end of geological upheavals, only certain events have influenced ***the whole surface of the world***. These events were ***of human origin***; but they have been very few.

The lack of means of communication among the different tribes of humanity, even more than the absence of any common interest transcending purely local interests, explains the rarity of such events. Until the most recent times, any conquest of distance involved remarkable luck. It was only after distance had been conquered that the problem of approaching nations isolated in a xenophobe tradition presented itself. Before that, any such undertaking demanded almost superhuman genius.

Accordingly, until our own century these events belonged solely to the highest category that mankind can conceive. They were all ***of a religious kind***. The inspiration which carried them on its wings across ocean and desert, despite all the perils of old-time navigation and the infinite slowness of caravans, could be nothing but ***a faith***.

I need scarcely say that Christianity stands out as the most important, the most triumphant of the spiritual meteors which thus blazed all over the world long before modern times. Traces of its propagation in the very heart of Asia and Africa, at a period when Europe was quite incapable of colonisation, are simply startling.

Much later, and with much less success, thanks to military conquest, mass migration and other more accidental disturbances, first Islamism and then Buddhism—as recent research has belatedly shown us—exerted an influence similarly general.

It was scarcely until 1900 that a factor of a radically different kind came into play: ***the inter-penetration of industry and trade*** all over the world; the inauguration of an international political economy, whose fits and starts, "booms" and "depressions," were henceforth to affect everybody on earth.

This tremendous innovation was due to European applied science—which some people also elevate to the rank of a religion—not only in the productivity of crops and manufactures which it makes possible, but also in the ultra-rapid means of transport and communication which it keeps on improving, and in the teaching, absolute as a dogma, which it offers to minds of all races.

Since about 1900, a state of inter-dependence was thus created among the most widely separated parts of the human race in the manifold spheres of diet, outfit, arms, luxuries and technical instruction. In 1914 a war—hitherto a commonplace episode in the life of all States, civilised or barbarian—in its turn became an illimitable cataclysm, which no soul on earth was really able to escape. Those who survived it were affected, or in danger of being affected, by one or another of the sequels to this scourge without parallel in history.

From many points of view, the war in itself demonstrated the profound result which might be expected to follow from the importation of all the material of the Whites among Coloured men, Yellow, Brown and Black: ***an intellectual result***, a modification of their ancestral ideas, national or racial, by the influence of ideas hitherto specifically ***White***. These ideas were, so to speak, conveyed ***in the very form*** of articles manufactured in Europe and America; and they were also expressed in books, works of art, and the various kinds of publicity circulated indiscriminately—in the absence of any effective censorship—in connection with purely commercial products.

But now another event, embryonic ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, is coming to its phase of maturity. Soon its consequences will thrust themselves rudely upon the whole world—and, in particular, upon the White race, which, it must be admitted, has brought them upon itself by a mixture of indifference, pride and greed.

This new factor cannot be compared, any more than the Great War, with any earlier human experience of a similar kind. It contains within itself the seeds of a future war.

This new factor is ***the discovery by the Coloured peoples of the White woman***, in terms of her physical, intellectual and social attributes and also, so to speak, ***her mystical quality***, ***her value as an ideal***, hitherto apparent to the White man alone.

The Coloured would never have overcome their sensory antipathy towards women of a different race and come to desire White women; they would never have transgressed the age-old usages of their own codes and made overtures to them, if these women had not struck them as being ***endowed with a superhuman character***. It is precisely because they have seen these women respected, idolised by the pick of White men, that the Coloured men themselves have come to think that they can derive ***a benefit in the sphere of ideas***, an immense prestige, from the conquest of such demi-goddesses.

If I strip my observations of all accessories and reduce them to their essentials, I find that this highly intellectual motive remains in my eyes the sole true one. Incidentally, it does honour to the Coloured peoples all over the world among whom I have found this motive to exist.

It follows that ***the new factor*** now in process of world-wide evolution derives, in direct descent, from the Christian factor whose immeasurable scope I have just re-

called. The contemporary White woman ***is what she is*** thanks only to the authority of Christianity, ***the religion which protects and exalts the weak***. She is an emanation from it; she is its masterpiece. White men pay their women a kind of worship, a mixture of adoration ***and fear***, precisely ***because they are Christians***, imbued with the Gospel spirit of humility—and also imbued with the memory of Eve the original sinner, the ally of the Devil.

That this very curious, but undeniable process has led the White race to practice a form of idolatry, or at least to profess a heresy, and that it may be punished for this sin by the loss of its supremacy—this is an argument in which I should find myself in agreement with the old-time Inquisitors. But perhaps, whatever their sin may have been, the Whites need not find the future so disastrous.

For we must also bear in mind that the White woman gives them a last chance in the great match which is being played among the different races. She subjects the Coloured peoples to the spell of her charm: these Coloured peoples who, after venerating the White man as a demi-god in the early period of colonisation, changed their minds when they were so lamentably duped and disappointed by all the adventurers who flocked to their countries from Europe.

Now, under the spell of the White woman's charm, they seem once more to be recognising the superiority of "the West." It looks as though they were thus once more putting themselves under the yoke—and on the anvil. But will the Whites grasp this advantage?

In any event, the issue at stake is vital.

For the whole Aryan or Caucasian family, for all the Whites in every continent, it is a matter of life or death, not only through the imminence of armed conflict, but above all, through the pacific, unobtrusive development of racial admixture, ***of cross-breeding***. This menace I shall study in more detail later.

VII

Let us assume that a criminal trial in Asia, Africa or Oceania, in a country wholly under the control of a Coloured race, requires the appearance of a woman before a court of law, as in the case of the Massie trial in Honolulu, for example.

Even nowadays in China or Japan—and ***a fortiori*** in earlier times—the woman concerned will dress in the humblest way, and as she comes before the judges she will demean herself, efface herself as much as possible, prostrating herself or at least keeping her eyes down and her arms folded across her bosom.

In her replies, she will strictly avoid anything that might direct attention to her or suggest that she is a definite ***personality***.

Among the Black or Brown peoples not yet modified by imitation of the Whites, the woman will humble herself and renounce any individuality in the same way.

Very rare are the savage tribes in which the female element has ever prevailed over the male. In such very rare cases, moreover, the origin of the respect accorded to women is maternity. As for the Asiatic empresses and their train of princesses, they benefited by dynastic prestige, or by reflection of masculine supremacy.

In short, nowhere except among the Whites have women hitherto had any right to an independent life. Outside Europe and America, they were, and they mostly still remain, indeterminate, indefinite creatures, eclipsed by the man and receiving at the most only a half-light ***from him***, when he lets them have it.

In fairness, I must mention that the theorists of feminism[1] protest against this historical view. They seek to establish that primitive human society was dominated by the mother, as the animal society is at a certain phase, and that there was a period of "matriarchal clans," comparable with she-wolves surrounded by their young.

They also recall the myth of the Amazons (which is to be found in the Northern countries in the form of the fabulous Valkyries as well as in the forests of South America, where the River Amazon was so baptised by an explorer for this reason): a kingdom, or at least a tribe or regiment, of women not only independent of masculine sovereignty, but even capable of attacking and defeating male armies.

But no real importance can be attached to these legends. The theorists of feminism themselves admit that "patriarchy soon became exclusive." Solon, Pericles, Moses, Numa, Manu, Confucius, as M. Abensour himself says, were unanimous in consigning woman to the harem, to the gynaecaeum or apart from the atrium, and treating her as a recluse, a perpetual minor, an intellectual inferior. At the most, pagan White antiquity admitted a role within the capacity of women in the mysteries of Isis and Cybele: a pale prelude to the Christian revolution.

The society of Imperial Rome, it is true, evolved towards comparative equality of at least intellectual rights between the two sexes. But the Roman code remained inflexible in insisting that woman's place was at home. To change all this, it took the creed of Christ: "The weak shall become strong."

Even so, the Christian doctrine reached the West laden with anti-feminist Judaism. ***Genesis*** showed Eve obedient to the counsel of the Serpent. Woman was impure and dangerous, according to all the ideas of the old Pharisees, and these ideas were partly taken over by the Fathers of the new Church, in contempt for the ideal tolerance of the Master, that indulgent friend of Mary Magdalene.

To form an idea of this very delicate period in our past, one may very profitably study such works as that of the Rev. Thomas Walker, D.D., ***Jewish Views of Jesus*** (London, 1931). This author brings out admirably how novel, how absolutely unique, was the contribution of the Gospel to thought in connection with the woman taken in sin, with the prostitute herself, with woman in general. ***It was something that had never been imagined in the world before***; and it was on this basis that all our White world became organised, including its femininity, with everything that this femininity represents of good—and of evil. The bad element has resulted from an interpretation of our Christian doctrine as false as the anti-feminist Jewish doctrine was false—and no less inhumane.

Our countries spent a period of centuries in the thick of a struggle between this Hebraic tradition and Christ's true teaching.

"Woman," Saint Thomas was still preaching as late as the thirteenth century, "is inferior to man in virtue and in dignity, and this proceeds from the fact that God did not create her ***immediately***, but took her out of Adam's side. Man is spirit, woman is matter."

The monks of the Middle Ages, when they were faithful to their vocation, fled from women. They looked upon her as the Devil's delegate. This conviction was not without effect in conferring upon the White woman a prestige somewhat mysterious, almost satanic, even when ideas became modernised.

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[1] ***Cf.*** M. Léon Abensour's excellent study, ***Le problême féministe,*** Paris, 1927.

The famous Council of Macon denied woman a soul. In revenge, she took refuge at this period in heretical meditations, in which she found the memory of the gentle Redeemer more purely preserved. Gnostics, Waldenses and Albigenses permitted her a religious role in equality with men. In 1281, Wilhelmina of Bohemia preached in Milan that she had been sent by God to complete the work of Jesus, which had been distorted by the malice of men. She proposed to institute a wholly feminine clergy. She bequeathed to her favourite disciple, Manfreda, the task of conquering Rome and taking the place of Pope Boniface VIII. But Boniface had this disturbing Manfreda burned alive.

"Chivalry," writes M. Abensour, "exalted ladies and 'courteous' love: in other words, not brute desire, which a man can satisfy with a woman who is his plaything, but a noble sentiment, which is in itself the romantic communion of two twin souls, a union of heart and mind in which the woman is sovereign. ***Through chivalry***, ***woman came to reign***. What a revenge for her, to make the proud baron her vassal! . . ."

So we come to Christina of Pisano, a contemporary of the Emperor Charles V, who achieved literary fame on her own account and, with Gerson's support, criticised the anti-feminism of the ***Roman de la Rose***. Marguerite of Navarre, too, defended the claims of her sex. "Coming after man, the last work of the Creator," she retorted to the theologians of Saint Thomas's school, "woman is the masterpiece of creation, which proceeded from the vegetal sphere to the sphere of sense, and from the sphere of sense to the sphere of reason, until it attained human perfection."

Here we already have ***our*** White woman, personalised, almost deified. Marguerite of Navarre also upheld the historical theory of matriarchy: "In the earliest civilised communities, the women ruled until men usurped their power."

After Montaigne, partisan of sex equality, Poulain de la Barre, the "Stuart Mill of the seventeenth century," emphasised the social importance of maternity, the mother's skilled role in education, the worldly, tactful capacity of abbesses who managed their convents better than abbots did their monasteries.

Finally, the French Revolution had a complex influence on feminism. In the eyes of the Puritan Jacobins, woman recalled too strongly the idea of Court debauchery and oppressive favourites. "The regime of women is finished, like that of kings," declared an anonymous ***sansculotte***, "for both the one and the other made slaves." Here we have an avowal of the position which the White woman had already attained even under the ***ancien régime***, in the midst of men disciplined by their ***galanterie***, the offspring of defunct chivalry.

Olympe de Gouges sought to complement the Declaration of the Rights of Man by a Declaration of the Rights of Woman. But she was guillotined; and Napoleon, by Article 312 of his Code, laid it down that "the wife owes obedience to her husband." With the Bourbon Restoration, however, appeared the Romantics, and they carried the worship of woman to lengths never before imagined. At the same time Saint-Simonism preluded Socialism and professed that the true human "cell" was "the couple," consisting of two equals; while the "rehabilitation of the flesh" excused Eve's weaknesses.

Throughout the whole White world exaltation of woman became prodigious. In Norway, Ibsenism echoed George Sand's novels in France. In England, following Mary Wollstonecraft, that passionate adversary of misogynism, Stuart Mill protested eloquently against the subjection of women. He even wanted to reform marriage and eliminate "all its hidden sorrows, as poignant as those which accompanied Negro

slavery." Thanks to his book, English women won a beginning of equality. Then came the heroic suffragists.

VIII

Looking back on all this, I appreciate too that, in contrast with the Coloured races, all we Whites are the heirs of an immense effort of achievement. It goes back to the artists of Greece and Rome. It stops during the troubled period of the barbarian invasions, of vandalism, of monastic austerity. It is taken up again by the popes and princes of the Renaissance. Finally, despite all the censorious, all the timorous, all the weakly mystical, on a pedestal formed by the enthusiasm of generations of art-students, art-critics, art-lovers, it raises the aesthetic Venus of our art, ***our own art***: ***the White woman***; sex-appeal worshipped in marble and on canvas.

The art of White painters, of White sculptors, is a besetting litany of Woman—even to the exterior decoration of our cathedrals. Take any photograph-album of famous pictures and statues, from Praxiteles and Phidias by way of the Italian, Flemish, French and Spanish schools down to our ***real*** artists of to-day in Europe and America. It is almost entirely devoted to the White woman. All these artists take her as their model, teach her something in return, idealise her in the course of a collaboration pursued for centuries between her flesh, which is a part of all-embracing Nature, and their dream, which keeps on striving ever higher towards a supernatural, an unattainable beauty.

This is the reason why, in the Tokyo art-schools, modern Japanese painters set before their pupils any number of photographic ***studies of White women***. I bear in mind those classical Japanese ivories, such realistic, such faithful reproductions of the ***real*** Japanese woman: that woman with too big a head, with a square block of a bust, with hips like a hind, with dumpy legs; the Yellow woman who for century after century has sat on her shins and compressed her buttocks.

How can any young Japanese painter or sculptor, once he has become familiar with the canons of European femininity, through seeing White women in his own country, through documentation by photographs in the nude, or perhaps through training in the art-schools of Montparnasse, fail to prefer Jean Goujon's ***Diane***, Falconet's ***La Baigneuse***, or Julie or Lola, the living models? These Yellows inevitably avow the aesthetic superiority in the nude of the White woman.

Here, incidentally—apart from any passing homage which may be paid to the pursuit of novelty by the ruggedly realistic school—is to be found the condemnation, in the eyes of posterity, of those European artists of recent date who deliberately paint ugliness, or choose types, or even simply "sports," not representative of White beauty.

Coming after the masters of idealisation of the flesh, these born idiots work as though they were stricken with a disease. Their disease is that they find it impossible to praise Woman as their fathers did before them, because this would mean that they must remain disciples. So they become masters of contradiction. Though their work may appeal as a curiosity to "intellectuals," to fanciers of paradox, it can never stand the test of time. For it is lacking in normal sex-appeal; and it is offered to a public more and more world-wide, more and more "earthy," more and more eager for erotic instruction and for sexual conquest—at least of an imaginative kind.

What these millions of new patrons of art want is the finest nudes in the glorious line of descent of the White woman. I can foresee in Asia and in Africa a tremendous revival of popularity for Raphael and for Bouguereau: for the authentic geniuses of the brush and for their reproducers in chromo-lithograph. Woe, on the other hand, to

the denigrators—woe to those who do not know how to paint, except by slinging mud! Their downfall will be a great, and a necessary, vindication of justice.

But between most of our artists and the women of the White race there has existed, ever since antiquity, a kind of compact, a kind of freemasonry, which aims at keeping the rest of the masculine herd in a state of perpetual sexual excitement. For it is, in fact, ***above all among us Whites*** that the adage is appropriate: "Man, the only animal always ready for love."

The mysterious African and Oceanic festivals, accompanied by circumcision, ritual murder, and frenzied, obscene dances after the consumption of intoxicating plants, certainly seem to be a means of confining the sexual act to certain dates in the year. The sexual impassivity of the Yellow man, accentuated by his addiction to opium, points to a voluntary abstinence on his part from what we Whites, despite our religion's enmity to the flesh, have always been blithely ready to practise in and out of season, as the naughty old tales of every country in Europe bear witness.

Accordingly, our artists have always been the abettors, the accomplices, the enthusiastic beautifiers of Woman. Even without their help, as far back as the Aryan cave-dwellers she may already have been the most desirable, and even the most beautiful of human females, thanks to a certain White racial strain, as Gobineau has suggested. But in any case, in the course of centuries ***she has become the most beautiful woman in the world*** through a regular pursuit of every aid to beauty, in alliance with the artists, those born beaters-up for beauty.

They and she have never stopped closely analysing her charm; renewing and reviving it either by great lasting inventions or temporary fashionable ruses; and even, with a subtle genius for plagiarism, annexing any as yet imperfect element of beauty which made its appearance anywhere in the world.

Merchants and mariners brought back cargoes, and out of them the artist picked for Woman a flower, a bow, a tissue. Such is the whole history of feathers, of silk, of satin, of mother-o'-pearl, of gems. Such is the history, too, of the innumerable Saracen, Turkish, Chinese, Red Indian, Lapp and Tahitian ***motifs*** which, ever since the twelfth century, have entered into the repertory of the White woman's dress and jewellery. Such is the history even of fashionably lubricous amusements, of the public performance of dances preparatory to the love-act: the South American Indian tango, the West Indian rumba, African jazz.

Such things served simply as ***rough drafts***. These dances of backward peoples, with all their confused suggestiveness, became masterpieces of restrained revelry once they had passed through the minds of White artists and the bodies of White women.

The tango is no longer a frank contact; it is an engagement-march. The contortions of the Negro dancing the Charleston or the ***biguin*** are toned down to elegant, rhythmical undulations. In the same way, the Congo fetish and the Manchu dragon are domesticated into a lace pattern or a pendant. There has been a great calling to order of all such savageries. It is a magnificent example of daring—or recklessness. The evil spirits which struck terror into Yellow and Black humanity have become no more than toys or trinkets in the hands of the White woman, whose own variety of devilishness is very different.

Is it not, indeed, ***among White women*** that we find nowadays the most representative, the most finished examples of feminine types of Africa, Asia and Oceania: White women of whom people say that they look exactly like Japanese, Chinese or Tahitian women?

The women who achieve these synthetic portraits are unquestionably White women. With the help of an artist, in their mirrors they discover physical traits, due perhaps to a remote racial strain, perhaps to pure chance, which relate them vaguely with some Coloured race or other.

Then, by the cut of their hair, the shape of their eyebrows, their make-up, their dress, their gait, they emphasise, and at the same time ***refine***, this tendency of theirs in such a way as to make it striking. They become the very expression of the race they copy, better even than its real daughters.

The result is that a Yellow man or a Brown man in our countries sometimes meets a White woman and imagines he has met the ideal woman of his own race, more characteristic, more exciting than ***any woman he could ever find*** in his own country. I know of one tragic love-affair in which this was what happened.

More commonly, how many White women now make Michelet's dream come true? "***Everything would be won if the White skin could assume golden and brown tints***. ***Plants without sun are pale and languishing***. . . ." They absorb the sun heroically, even to the point of fever and blisters, so that, while remaining triumphantly White women, they may take to themselves the marvellous bronze of statues.

Of course, there are some experiments in this style which are absolutely grotesque. There are some White women with no taste, just as there are some who are frightfully ugly.

But I am talking about the ones who count; and I say that they exalt the achievement of fashion into a regular science—which has no parallel among the Coloured—of sex-appeal. With the help of a cohort of devoted men who make their livings out of them—dress-designers, dressmakers, jewellers—they constitute in their own persons veritable encyclopaedias of the art of attraction, the art of excitation.

But their repertory, in its infinite variety, has overshot its goal: the society of White males for whom it was meant. Nowadays it goes and dazzles males abroad. It goes and fires the admiration, the desire, of other hundreds of millions of ***Coloured males*** all over the surface of the globe.

For, while it may be an egoistic means of beautifying oneself, fashion is also a form of publicity, a form of propaganda.

Thanks to fashion, conveyed by the wonderful facilities for communication which now entwine the world, the Coloured have learned about the superior beauty of White women, about their higher power of sexual attraction. They have discovered the "carnal treasure" which hitherto White men alone have known and enjoyed.

Here is to be found the true explanation of everything that at this very moment stirs and growls beyond our European horizons. Herein lies the immense menace of a race-war such as could never have been foreseen by Priam of Troy and Menelaus of Greece.

There are some Whites fools enough to think: "On with another European war, so that my business may look up and I can buy a twelve-cylinder car for my wife Odette, or my mistress Gladys!" Perhaps, even while they think so, there is already declared against us—and against the French in particular, because they hold Paris and its ***Parisiennes***—a war that will go on much longer, a war to the death ***for the actual possession*** of Odette and Gladys by the Coloured men.

IX

We have now studied the extraordinary success of the White woman throughout the modern world, and the sexual attraction which she nowadays exerts all over it. We

must now complete our analysis of her triumph, and also seek further explanation of the prestige which she enjoys among her own race. Physical beauty does not suffice to explain it.

Her higher, her irresistible power of sex-appeal is due to the development of the White woman's ***whole personality***: a process which she has been free to pursue for centuries, and which sometimes goes the length of regular megalomania and leads her to sexuality without motherhood, to pure eroticism.

It has been asserted that Greek and Roman antiquity, like the barbarians of the West and South, had no knowledge of love as a ***sentiment***, of flirtation, or of fashion: that triple game, in which every one of our women stakes on one chance or on all the chances one after the other, and which metamorphoses the mediocrity of our daily lives into luxuriance, variety, enjoyment and sometimes tragedy.

On the contrary, it may be taken for granted that, ever since there has been life on our planet, everything within the sphere of ideas has been tried everywhere. But it is clear that only the White race has long accepted a kind of ***deification*** of women.

This is really a religious idea. It is an unexpected, paradoxical consequence of Christianity, which recommended us to succour, respect and ***exalt the weak***.

Chivalry was born of this Gospel precept. The White woman of the Middle Ages, protected and revered on account of her inability to fight, realised both her wonderful good fortune and the obligation which was imposed on her to do all in her power to keep on deserving it. She exerted herself to adorn her weakness, to become a masterpiece of daintiness, a carnal idol, a kind of monstrosity infinitely exciting and desirable.

As the Christian precept: "Succour the weak," became blurred and men turned irreligious, it was sex, the flesh, the promise of illimitable, incomparable delight which came to justify the privileged position of woman.

She was still deferred to, she was still sheltered, she was still treated chivalrously; but this was no longer by way of obedience to saintly bishops, Christ's successors: it was now merely a matter of her carnal possession.

Besides, the human creature is not simply either an animal which enjoys life or a mind which reasons coldly. There is in all of us the cursed, or the blessed, instinct to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of winning, to surrender ourselves for the sake of possessing, to escape from the prison in which our bodies confine us in order to meet other captives and communicate with them: the instinct to ***love*** and beloved.

This instinct is, no doubt, in its origin selfish; but it becomes a miracle of the ideal of abnegation when it is transfigured by high thinking.

The White woman, assured from the early centuries of our era that all good Christians would defend her material interests, never limited her ambition to mercenary advantage. She wanted to make herself loved: in short, to conquer the men who attracted her. For that matter, it was through love that she could obtain from men the most immoderate sacrifices.

Hence arises all the confusion, all the interplay—with the dice always loaded to women's advantage—between sexual desire on the one hand, and on the other hand sentimental passion, which has always been regarded as refined during those hypocritical periods when people affected to ignore and despise its physiological basis.

So far as the Coloured peoples are concerned, the Pekin professor may legitimately invoke his intellectual life, the Zambesi hunter may legitimately invoke his sporting life, in denial of the Freudian dogma: "Every form of activity may be summed up in terms of eroticism." But we modern Whites, who are in fact neopagans, cannot help accepting this dogma. Love—as our women and our poets insist

on understanding it—absolutely conditions all our undertakings, even the most mercantile, even the most mystical.

If this love sometimes strikes us as dissociated from the flesh, to such a point that we feel it a blasphemy to think about the flesh, this is precisely because White women, with their marvellous artistry, have managed to "sexualise" even the most abstract emotions they can inspire.

To this end, feminine artistry has not adopted a process of generalisation. It has not extended to everything, for that would mean loss of personality. On the contrary, ***it has made the little person of a woman the centre of attraction for everything***, ***the focus of everything***. This small spider, by spreading the web of fashion in all directions, has gradually taken to herself the sum-total of our worldly goods.

To-day, ***everything in the world*** belongs to the White woman's realm. She is no longer cloistered, as Coloured women are, in a special annex to man's mansion. The style of all public buildings, the decoration of restaurant and sleeping-cars in international expresses, are designed solely to please her. This is why ***it is legitimate*** that pictures of her along the roads of the four continents should enliven advertisement-boards in honour of the cigarettes she smokes, the cars she drives.

Every White woman, then, is free to derive from anywhere she likes anything that will add to her beauty, her charm, her adornment, and make her more desirable and more loved. Some simply dress themselves—in itself a very difficult accomplishment. They borrow the bows on their hats or the trimming on their skirts from some exotic flower, if not, indeed, from the cog-wheels and the fly-belts of industry. Others add the lustre of learning to that of their curves and curls, and go in for art, science or politics.

We find some such pretension even among the ***hetairae*** of ancient Athens. But they belonged to a very close corporation: they were professional courtesans. Among us, on the contrary, it is a question of ***all women***.

Every White woman is brought up, trained, almost constrained with a view to the development of a sex-appeal ***de luxe***, so intoxicating, so super-human that sometimes you cease to inhale its perfume as that of the physical flower it really is: you experience a kind of consecration and ***adore*** this Venus as though she were really changed into a goddess.

Born of that Christian religion which at first refused women a soul, she has come to take the place of the old Jehovah himself in receiving the offerings of the sons of Israel—which, alas, was precisely what the Prophets feared.

In our farcically democratic civilisation, every White woman has a right to love: real love, ideal love, complete love. There ensues terrible competition among them.

As rivals, not only do they all work together to exalt the collective personality of their symbol, the White woman. They also exert themselves separately to render their own individualities distinct, if not unique.

Let me take an example rather exceptional, but all the more convincing. Madeleine and Simone are twin sisters and each other's doubles. These two girls exactly alike must needs set themselves in contrast. So one dyes her hair dark, and the other dyes her hair light. One plays the little madcap, the other poses as dreamy and serious. Anything will do that makes them ***different***, whether it be aesthetic surgery, cocaine or cocktails.

This rivalry, which is really vital, is the origin of all the marvels of fashion which we may admire around us; of any number of sacrifices to fashion, touching and even heroic; and also, when the woman concerned lacks talent, of more or less absurd excesses. I have ventured to call such ill-inspired women megalomaniacs. But the fact of

the matter is that all White women are megalomaniacs. Megalomania, indeed, is the secret of miracles.

These volunteers for the martyrdom of fashion do not hesitate to make themselves ill through the torture of "permanent waving" or through sentimental auto-suggestion. They live like ascetics for fear of getting fat, fasting and drugging until they get ulcerated stomachs; for at all costs they must win love.

That they should love in return is much rarer, though they are calumniated in this respect. Almost all of them are really just like bitches: they need to be stroked, to go to sleep with the scent of their master in their nostrils, and sometimes to get a sound beating from him.

But how many good masters are there for all these willing slaves?

That is their secret. It is also their curse. In their own countries, in the magnificent cities of Europe and America where everything belongs to them, where everybody desires them and fawns upon them, where they are despotic queens—here they live, compete, and die almost all lonely, misunderstood, unsatisfied, in despair with bitterness and boredom.

We have just seen the reason: they have differentiated themselves from the male to such a point that they cease to believe that they belong to the same species.

In primitive society the woman and the man were never "lovers." This idea, as we understand it, is inconceivable to the savage. He has sexual relations with his wife, but otherwise he treats her simply as a younger brother, as a person weaker than himself, ***but entirely identical with himself***. For her part, while she lacks the pleasure of being courted, while she shares all the hardships of a rough life, on the other hand she is surrounded by a sense of fraternity, by a warm, comforting, human companionship. Besides, being as natural, as animal as her male, she does not suffer from thinking him coarse.

We civilised people, on the contrary, have become only too well aware of the gulf which keeps on widening between the two sexes—or at least did so until recently. For nowadays the co-education of children and the entrance of women into offices and factories mark a reaction against this peril, which has recreated some degree of comradeship and some possibility of mutual understanding.

But the prejudice is old and strong. The modern White man, even more than the White woman, imagines that there is an ***inevitable*** incomprehension between the object of his desire and himself. This is one of the factors which sharpen his desire. But it is also, so far as he is concerned, a great source of discomfort, if not disaster.

White women feel themselves to be refined, artistic, angelic. Even before they grow up, they assume men to be dull and stupid; and, unhappily, only too often afterwards they find that they are right.

It is their function to amuse the laborious boors who pay for their luxury. But, as these boors fail to amuse them, they never feel sufficiently paid. They are supposed to be inspirers, counsellors. But, as they find that they cannot lean on their principals, they get tired and disgusted with acting the lie of solidarity.

Save for a few sheep-like souls who close their eyes to facts, all women know very well that the world has ceased to believe in its old gods. Being idolised themselves, ***they hunger and thirst for a religion which men cannot teach them***. Hence they feel lonely, body and soul. They lack an ideal.

Whites of the male sex, for their part, since they expect too much, are given to saying that sexually their wives disappoint them.

In fact, apart from a few high-class professionals, White women never play the part of courtesans whole-heartedly. They do so just enough to get hold of husbands.

After that, they expect their husbands to teach them to be mistresses. They are, indeed, quite within their rights; for, in a civilised country, the male ***ought to be*** capable of awakening his wife and educating her sexually.

All he is entitled to require of her is that she should possess the capacity, the gift for being so awakened and educated; and this gift White women undoubtedly possess more than the femininity of any other race on earth.

The complaint of White men on this score is therefore unfounded; and our White women retort to it with a whole arraignment of their own, which is cruelly full and precise.

They accuse their lovers, their husbands, even their partners in adultery, to whom they offer their innocence, their confidence, their readiness, the fruit of their youth, intact or not, but in any case tasty—they accuse these men of being ignorant, clumsy, brutal, pig-headed, and negligent and unhygienic into the bargain.

Unhappily, they are telling the truth.

You have only to question those whose business it is to tend or console women—nurses, gynaecologists, priests—and you will be edified to find how astoundingly accurate these accusations are in these days of ours. Their testimony makes up a lamentable tale of folly, not to speak of crimes against the most elementary rules of hygiene, not to speak of fanatical superstition: the old Jewish spirit of suspicion of Eve, the original sinner.

X

The vast majority of White men, rich and poor, successful and unsuccessful alike, intent on the struggle for existence, have never had time to cultivate their sexual side. In this respect, they remain on the level of their peasant or warrior ancestors. Their women, on the other hand, have soaked themselves in scented baths until they have made themselves anaemic, hyper-sensitive, super-effeminate.

Hence arises the increasing danger of child-birth, which uncivilised women endure in a cave without any help at all, whereas among us nowadays it requires as many precautions as the crisis of an illness. Hence arises also what is really a new species of feminine genital organs, much more complex and much weaker than those of prolific primitive women.

Most American men, in particular, appear to be entirely unaware of this modern factor in physical love. This ignorance is the result, in their case, of their absorption in business and the strictness of an official code of morality which imposes silence about any problem relating to the flesh.

Accordingly their wives, those wonderful North American women who constitute one of the most precious possessions in the world's "carnal treasury," often turn away from their husbands, fine physical specimens though they are, as soon as their honeymoon experience reveals these husbands to them as brutes incapable of creating harmony in sexual satisfaction. Some of these wives console themselves by taking to drink, or by escapades on the beaches of California and Florida, haunted by adventurers who specialise in the sex-game.

So much—save for exceptions whom I congratulate—for one of the main regions of the empire of the Whites.

In South America the ignorance, the clumsiness, the brutality of the males are just as bad. But the Spanish tradition cloisters the wife at home; and, though she bears, feeds and brings up any number of children, the husband goes off to amuse himself

with farm-girls more or less crossed with Indian blood, who can stand the strain better.

In Europe, among Northerners and Southerners alike, despite less strict legislation and an immense background of frank sensuality in art and literature, knowledge of the technique of physical union is equally limited.

There is an almost incredible dead-weight of prejudice, mock-modesty, and ***masculine*** stupidity (for women model themselves on men. Secretly, they are much more curious than men about physical pleasure, and they have much more taste for it).

The deeper you probe into this subject, the less you are led to think of the mentality of men supposed to be civilised, who would never think of riding a horse or driving a car without learning something about it, but cheerfully undertake the responsibility of initiating a virgin, when they know nothing but what they have picked up from resigned, hasty prostitutes.

The harrowing spectacle really presented by married couples, apparently most united and most respectable, may best be studied in our old provincial towns. Once you get below the surface, you are staggered by what you find.

You find wives who have suffered endless years of misery, tired out with disgust and torture, but firmly persuaded by their friends and relations that this is their natural destiny, and that there is nothing in marriage but such butchery. So they sometimes grow old, and at last earn the right to sleep without suffering, though they still show the scars of their youthful wounds. Or else aversion, disgust and the exhaustion of child-birth deliver them; and they well deserve fulfilment of the promise of a better Beyond, in compensation for the cruel apathy in which they have vegetated here below.

The widower, in such cases, with no idea that he has done anything wrong, with his ease of conscience guaranteed by Church and State, sheds a tear or two, puts on mourning, and proceeds to look for another physical flower to tear to pieces; for he cannot live a life of chastity.

Sometimes, however, a doubt, a confused kind of remorse, preys upon him. Hence arises the brisk sale of those semi-medical textbooks which aim at instructing such fools. Text-books of this kind ought to be brought under official control, properly drafted, and then distributed to all young men as soon as they are old enough to marry. At present they are generally bought and read too late.

This barbarous state of affairs leads to the premature uglification of any number of White women. As girls, they were marvels of physical grace and frank charm. Marred marriage overwhelms them, disgusts them, closes all their horizons. They proceed to let themselves go, renounce their innate attractiveness which earned them nothing but this sickening experience, and deliberately disguise themselves as amorphous matrons, mothers of families and heads of households.

To this same origin, on the other hand, may be traced those scandalous cases of revolt when some less submissive woman, condemned to this experience, cuts herself free and flings herself into some equivocal adventure. The true moralist, devout admirer of all the wonderful joys that life can hold, ***so long as they are healthy***, ***normal and rational***, must grieve over the one kind of excess as much as the other.

It goes without saying that there are some White men, gifted and perspicacious, who are expert and happy in their love-life. There are also some ardent White women who reproach their lovers not with their brutality, but, if I may venture to say so, with their flabbiness and their uncertainty. A race which numbers millions of individuals can provide any example, and any monstrosity, you may want.

Nevertheless, I think I am being faithful to the common measure of truth when I couple my portrait of the White woman, chock-full of sex-appeal, but much more innocent than she looks, with a portrait of the White man, harassed by business worries and simply ignorant when he allows himself a hasty leisure for amorous recreation.

To complete our picture of the modern world, we must now turn to a third figure, still in the background, but coming closer almost year by year to our other two figures: the Coloured man, the new male actor in a sexual drama which is now ***interracial***.

CHAPTER XII

THE COLOURED MEN DISCOVER THE WHITE WOMAN

I

"KUO-MO-JEU first studied medicine in Japan. Then he suddenly developed a taste for literature and became a friend of the Muses. He translated some of Goethe's works, and his introduction of this great writer to China made a deep impression on our young men."

So writes the literary critic Tsen-Kio-Chi (***Quarterly Bulletin of Chinese Bibliography,*** March, 1934). He does not tell us whether Kuo-Mo-Jeu translated, in particular, the great German writer's immortal ***Werther***; but I imagine he did. Neither ***Wilhelm Meister*** nor ***Faust*** would be so likely to move the present-day youth of China so much as the passion, the suffering, the tragic despair of the lover of lovely Charlotte, White and blonde.

We may take it that at this moment, all over the world, there are thousands upon thousands of new Werthers with Yellow, Brown and Black skins. Sometimes they declare themselves to the object of their passion: a White woman. Sometimes, at the cost of sacrifices of all kinds, they even succeed in winning her. But, in the immense majority of cases ***up to the present***, they confine themselves to desiring her without any encouragement from her, or even without her knowing anything about it.

They watch her, they spy upon her, they follow her, they hang round her, they dream about her in accordance with their own mentality, which is oddly divided between their old barbarism—or their different kind of civilisation from ours—and their hazy idea of European formulas. In their eyes she may still be a goddess, but she is certainly a human creature as well. ***They know that she is accessible to them***; and rarer and rarer among them are those who deem it necessary to imitate the melancholy of Goethe's hero and die unsatisfied.

Here is a story which will help us to measure the immense distance which Coloured men have travelled, since a quite recent period, in their discovery of the White woman. Women travellers who are still anything but old can recall a time when they were regarded by Coloured peoples as creatures utterly novel and almost monstrous.

Just before the Great War, in 1914, a French lady of my acquaintance and her husband were hunting big game in Africa on the borders of Uganda and the Sudan. One day, not far from Lake Rudolph, she met some natives who showed extreme astonishment at the sight of her.

Never had they seen a living woman with a fair complexion and slight build like this one. Not for a moment did it occur to them that she might belong to the race of White men, of which they had sometimes seen strongly built and sunburned specimens. The lady was very pretty. Nevertheless, these primitives did not take her either for a goddess or for a demon. They simply asked the hunters' interpreter whether she was a ***white monkey*** belonging to a species hitherto unknown to them.

These good Blacks were doubtless the last inhabitants of the world who had ***never seen*** a White woman. The days are gone on this earth of ours when our women had the ***benefit***—for everything is relative—of being such a novelty. Their fame, their photos, even their living pictures have been carried by the lightning speed of modern

life to the remotest islands. Often, indeed, one of them has strayed so far in person: a more or less flattering specimen of her species. May we not live to look back with regret on the days now gone when simple savages took the White woman sometimes for a mere monkey, but much more usually for a wonderful fairy!

Once the Coloured men had ***seen*** her, another long step remained for them to take: to realise that she was a woman, in the same sexual sense as their own sisters and wives. They have now taken that step.

I beg pardon for telling another story slightly shocking; but it is also typical. The heroine of it was another French lady of my acquaintance, perfectly respectable, well-balanced and—despite what follows— prudent. She was the wife of a French colonial official. In 1925 she accompanied her husband to a post in the south-east of Madagascar, a region inhabited by the Sakalaves and the Bares.

These tribes, immigrants from Black Africa, are very different from the Huvas or Madagascans of Malay origin. They are much more unsophisticated. The White woman engaged a young native as a servant or ***bouté***, as such servants are called out there. He was a black, woolly haired youth, with an almost incredibly childish face. Our colonial lady had such difficulty in making him understand the simplest thing he had to do that she certainly never stopped to wonder whether he was virile or not. In her eyes, he was just a boy, nothing more. She would never have thought of him ***as a man***.

Well, through sheer force of habit in that trying climate which makes you forgetful of our European conventions, this boy, really sexless in her eyes, came to take the place of a female servant, whom she could not get in the district. In the morning he brought her breakfast in bed. In the end, he got to the point of handing her her wrap when she got out of her bath—stark naked, of course. It was convenient, and she did not see any harm in it. You must have lived in the backwoods to realise that, in fact, such things may be done quite virtuously. The idea of racial difference seems—or seemed—sufficient to make such intimacy innocent.

But one day—there may have been a cyclone in the air, or he may have been drinking arrack, or he may simply have awakened to a new world—when the ***bouté***, who for his part was clad in a rudimentary shirt, appeared beside her bath, she found to her alarm that he had suddenly ceased to be sexless. She sent him away at once, and never exposed herself to any such incident again.

This substitute for a maid-servant had proclaimed himself a man. This Black man had come to identify the White woman with women of his own colour, and seeing her naked very naturally excited him. Such a process of loss of respect for White women, of growth of desire for them, has become world-wide in our time among races which we used to regard as imperturbable.

Let us follow the course of its development in the light of some Abyssinian experiences.

II

Situated on her high plateaux rising from barren, burning coasts, Abyssinia, at war with Italy as I write, remained almost unaffected by any White influence until not so very long ago. The Italo-Ethiopian clash in 1896 and the unhappy battle of Adowa led the Neguses to think that they could keep out Europeans. The war of 1914 taught them, like all the other Coloured peoples in the world, that the Whites hated, betrayed and massacred one another just as though they did not belong to the same race.

Until that time, Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, had seen very few White women. Those it did see were the wives and daughters of the heads of Legations. These ladies naturally kept very much to themselves. They left their villas only on horseback or in litters, surrounded by an escort of soldiers. Accordingly, despite the general contempt of North Africans for femininity, they were respected almost as much as their menfolk.

What broke the spell was the arrival from the coast of one or two unscrupulous European adventurers, with their equally unscrupulous womenfolk. These womenfolk surrendered themselves to the Musulman emperor, Lidj Yassou, and several of his lords. The whole court, the whole of Abyssinia, soon knew that ***it was possible to have carnal knowledge of a White woman***.

The result was that their environment changed entirely for wives and daughters belonging to the official European colony. They were subjected to actual insult by the Abyssinian lower orders, and, on the part of more powerful personages in the empire, to certain attentions sometimes highly flattering, but still highly embarrassing.

A charming French lady, whose husband was attached in an eminent capacity to the French Legation, lived for several years at Addis Ababa. She told me that, at a big dinner-party, the Emperor Yassou invited her to sit on his left. This absolute sovereign, who was quite young and looked rather like Nero, started by staring in silence at the White woman's pretty shoulders, left bare by her evening-dress. The presence of several European Ministers, sitting opposite him at table, however, kept his despot's desire under control.

All at once, my lady friend felt a hard bare knee rubbing against her knee under cover of the table-cloth. The Emperor had thought of this method of manifesting his gallantry discreetly. The Frenchwoman blushed, and then turned pale. She looked at the men of her own race anxiously; but she did not dare to move or complain. That would have meant too fearful a case of ***lèse-majesté***.

Yassou annoyed her like this for some minutes. Then he crossed his legs the other way and paid similar clandestine homage to his neighbour on his right, the wife of an Italian nobleman who had come to Abyssinia to hunt big game. In her turn, the Marchesa Z. got a shock; but she, too, forced herself to take no notice. The delighted potentate was next emboldened to make extremely familiar signs to the Marchesa's two daughters, charming Florentine girls, who were naturally abashed and frightened.

This happened before Fascism and its great revival of Italy's strength. At that time, the last thing Italian policy wanted was any Ethiopian incident. So the big-game hunter, too, put his pride in his pocket. All he did was interrupt his conversation with the princes, and say quite calmly: "Graziella, Lucrezia, leave the room." The girls stood up from the table and went away, much relieved. Yassou assumed all the indifference of a statue, the dinner ended without further overtures on his part, and nothing was said afterwards. But nowadays we know that Fascist Italy has a long, exact memory.

Another night, the same French lady was dancing, in company with all the decent White society of Addis Ababa, at one of the Legations, a house in colonial style with french windows opening on to a verandah. She went out and leant on the balustrade to get a breath of the cool night air. Then the light from the room behind her enabled her to catch sight of a native perched in a tree, who seemed to be watching the spectacle of the dancing avidly.

The next morning, one of her Askaris—the mercenary soldiers of the Legation escort—handed her a letter clumsily written in pencil.

"Sent you by Abyssinian saw you last night," explained the messenger.

The letter contained an unambiguous wish: "Madame, I should like to sleep with you"—no more, no less. The startled recipient told her husband, who complained to the Ethiopian police. The writer of the frank message was at once arrested. He was, alas, a former Mission pupil, and his ability to write in European languages had secured him an appointment as one of the Court scribes.

But the Emperor was severe on insults offered by anybody else but himself. He immediately sentenced the offender to be whipped—and the offendee to witness his punishment. Mme X would have much preferred him to be let off with a reprimand; but in Abyssinia law still rests directly on force, and she could congratulate herself that the sentence was no worse. The scribe was brought to the French villa in chains, tied to a mounting-block, and given a good lashing in the presence of his Dulcinea. He did not pester her again.

Nevertheless, he had his revenge for this humiliating episode. The pupil of the Fathers climbed all the steps of the Abyssinian official hierarchy, and was finally appointed a Minister. In this capacity, he set off one day for Europe to represent his country at an international congress in Paris. At the Élysée, at a reception by the President of the French Republic, he once more met the lady who had made him so bold and had him punished for his boldness. He was now transformed into a perfect "Coloured gentleman," and doubtless his looks and his money secured him consoling adventures among the less scrupulous White women of Montmartre and Montparnasse.

In closing this curious chapter of Ethiopian history, I must emphasise that here, as elsewhere, the imprudence or the venality of certain Whites was the origin of this scandalous awakening. I must also render full justice to other sovereigns and great feudatories of the empire once Christianised by Byzantium. Menelik and Taffari, unlike the Musulman Yassou, did their best to discipline the wild races who people these African mountains. If we Europeans failed to maintain our prestige there, we have only ourselves to blame. It remains to be seen whether Italy will restore it.

III

Let us return to Asia.

In November 1931 I had the honour of accompanying through Indo-China a member of the French Government, M. Paul Reynaud. When we reached Hué, the old capital of the Empire of Annam, modernised under the French protectorate, a big reception was held by the Resident-General, M. Yves C. Chatel, one of our most outstanding colonial administrators. At his invitation, not only did French officials and other leading Europeans from all the provinces assemble at the fine Residency palace, but also a large number of princes of the imperial family and mandarins. Their wives were naturally asked too—though for these Annamite ladies it was not so natural as all that.

So in a setting as modern as you would find in Paris, there was a juxtaposition, a mingling, of two societies, which even the most emancipated system of colonisation in the world has not yet managed to merge. I have rarely had before my eyes a spectacle more interesting for the purpose of appreciating what can be done by the goodwill, the almost unnatural, paradoxical sympathy, of one race towards another. For there is no gainsaying that the French have that theory of theirs—the theory that all human

beings are fundamentally identical—so firmly fixed in their heads that they often sacrifice to it the plainest warnings of instinct.

At this official ***soirée*** at Hué, the White women displayed themselves as they always do at a dance. In other words, their very low-cut, lissom dresses, clinging to their bodies, left little of their figures to the imagination. Their backs and their shoulders were bare; their breasts and their hips could be divined; and their legs were clearly revealed as they danced. If this frank fashion became simply painful and ridiculous in the case of certain matrons, there was no denying that it set off the beauty of the young women, whose graceful or stately movements and dazzling flesh, thus framed in tasteful material, inevitably drew men's eyes.

Almost all the Yellow women, on the contrary, were clad in accordance with their tradition for ceremonial occasions. A kind of cassock or cope in red, blue or green velvet hid their forms, which were small and slim. This garment was tightly fastened at the neck, covered the arms to the wrists, and fell straight to the ankles.

Cramped in this way, they stayed in the corners of the big rooms. Scarcely one of them ventured into the whirlpool of jazz. They watched their Western sisters dancing with shy curiosity. Some of their little rose-rouged faces were charming—but like the faces of dainty little girls.

If they were rebellious against the dogma of effacement which excluded them from any individual life in the old Confucianist society, they were nevertheless still only in the early stages of their emancipation; and they were still ignorant of the art of making the most of themselves. They would even have thought it terribly indelicate to emphasise their femininity before strangers.

One thing which could not fail to trouble them was the feelings of their husbands, ***their own men***. To tell the truth, these men, the é***lite*** of the aristocratic and literate classes of Annam, scarcely left their sides. A few of them, in impeccable evening clothes, danced with the Whites. These were young diplomats back from their studies in Hanoi and even in Paris, who exerted themselves to preach, by example, complete assimilation between the France of Asia and that of Europe. But most of them wore the mandarin's robe of black silk, and watched us with a reserve which, though the height of politeness, was nevertheless constrained and embarrassed.

All of them had seen White women before. But it was not likely that many of these provincial mandarins had ever contemplated White women in such numbers and in a dress of ceremony so closely bordering on nudity.

I tried to gather impressions from their faces, sealed with Asiatic mystery. Many sidelong glances and fleeting frowns, as they exchanged a few whispered words, seemed to me to reveal astonishment, scandalisation, contempt: all quite explicable.

I questioned some of the most perspicacious French veterans. They had stopped thinking about what struck me, as a new-comer; but they admitted that, before they got used to it, they too had anxiously estimated the effect of our ways, so natural in our eyes, upon the mentality of the "protected" race.

In particular, they emphasised that the exhibition of breasts, through the low-cut, transparent corsages of European women, was bound to shock the Annamites. Among their women, the sense of shame is situated much more in the region of the breasts than in that of the belly. A native woman will think nothing of taking off her brown canvas trousers in the presence of men in order to ford a stream. But she will die sooner than untie the brassiere which compresses her breasts.

Nevertheless, I felt certain that it was not disapproval and disgust which were uppermost in the minds of these Indo-Chinese men as they gazed at our fashionable femininity. Their contemptuous superiority was an amused one, and, I must add, a

tickled, roguish, sensual one. It was a quite normal reaction among men who, though they might belong to a non-White race, still belonged to the masculine gender, and many of whom—regular old-style lords, chin-bearded, subtle gourmets —were capable of appreciating refined pleasures.

Even if they had their ancestors' horror of White flesh, they could not fail to feel sheer physical emotion at the display of feminine artistry, in their eyes so bold, so frank, interpreted by fifty living, breathing statues.

The next day the Reynaud mission was honoured by a night ***fête*** in the Purple City of the Nguyens—the Imperial Palace of Hué. This time the whole Court was present, though the young Emperor Bao-Dai, still a university student in France, was not there.

We assembled in the great throne-room, all red and gold, with squat columns and low ceiling, in accordance with the ancient Chinese style of architecture, which had no knowledge of metallic framework. Amid curious pictures, carven chests, showcases of lacquer, enamel, coral and jade, an enormous clock in gilded bronze seemed to be the most honoured object.

This old present from my country to the sovereigns of Annam was in pretty poor style. Our nineteenth century perpetrated nothing more mediocre. But its decoration included four caryatids: four effigies of half-naked European women. Who knows what strange dreams these slim, stream-lined bodies, so different from the local femininity, inspired in His Majesty Than-Thai, that sadistic despot and butcherer of his own little Yellow princesses, whom he shot down with a carbine or dissected alive, disguised as his own surgeon?

The present-day princesses were all there, ranging from girls of fifteen to empresses-dowager of great age—the latter with their inordinately long nails, which stopped them doing the least thing for themselves. The younger ones, for the most part, still lacquered their teeth black and chewed betel, whose crimson spittle made their lips look like bleeding wounds: a detail which scarcely softened their faces, at once angular and flat, and precociously worn.

The White women guests of the night before had also come this evening—in new dresses no less "***Parisienne***," no less attractive, no less revealing in their clever coquetry. Even when I made the most sincere effort to rid myself of any racial prejudice, I could not deny them an immense superiority in charm and sexual attraction. Even the setting did them no harm. They had taken it into account, they had struck an exotic note for themselves, and they triumphed without the least difficulty, thanks to the faculty of adaptation which they had exercised for centuries.

Still, I was just saying to myself that I could not trust my own eyes if I attributed to them the point of view of a different race, when a young mandarin joined me. He was wearing the classical robe, but his fine, keen eyes shone behind American spectacles. Though he had not yet been outside Indo-China, he had taken a French course of study at Saigon.

I could not refrain my questioning him, very tactfully, on the subject which I had on my mind. What did he think of these fashions, so unlike those of his own country? He smiled, and at first answered me simply in pleasantly polite formulas. Then, all at once, he seemed to make up his mind to be more truthful. In substance, this was what he said:

"The difference in taste between old men—my grandfather, for example—and myself is very marked. They still say that White women have teeth like dogs, that their complexions are 'potato-colour'—which means sickeningly insipid—and that

they are as gawky as cranes. In their eyes, the symbol of desire is 'the quid of betel which the beloved offers her lover already all chewed up.'

"As for me and those who think with me, when we were quite young we listened to your teachers vaunting the great Greek and Roman sculptors, and the great painters from Botticelli to Rembrandt, Ingres and Renoir. Inevitably, our standard of feminine beauty has been changed. For that matter, this follows upon our whole intellectual, social and political evolution.

"We realise that our race has been underfed since time immemorial, and that this is why it looks so sickly. The cause of this widespread physiological degeneracy was the tyranny of our despotic emperors, who oppressed not only the women in our empire, but also almost all the men, to the advantage of a handful of veteran soldiers. We hope that, with, the help of democratic France, we shall succeed in feeding our whole people properly, in circumstances which will facilitate the harmonious development of their bodies and minds alike. Once we live in freedom, once we can go in for sport, we shall grow taller.

"Then our women, too, little by little, will become as athletic, as self-confident, as these fine Frenchwomen of yours."

IV

Here is the complete Yellow Werther, sketched in a touching, elegiac passage in Jean Dorsenne's far-sighted—but, in my opinion, too pessimistic—book, ***Faudra-t-il évacuer I'Indochine***?

"I knew a young man at Hué. . . . He belonged to one of the oldest and most respected families in Annam. His father is the very type of old mandarin; but this did not prevent him from sending Monsieur Thiep to study Western learning in France.

"So M. Thiep lived for several years in Paris. His good looks and his privileged position threw the doors of the best society open to him. He was entertained by families which have preserved the fine flower of Parisian culture.

"He enjoyed playing tennis with girls at Auteuil. He tasted the pleasure of having tea in the Bois with an elegant lady friend. He was fond of frequenting fashionable dance-halls and cabarets. He tangoed and fox-trotted to the noisy, nostalgic strains of jazz, with pretty girls by no means shy. He listened to Negro songs, and sat up all night in Montparnasse and Montmartre drinking iced champagne. Then he had to go home. . . .

"Henceforth a perpetual misunderstanding separated him from his parents. M. Thiep shared his troubles with me. His father kept on talking about his getting married. He suggested this or that girl, whom M. Thiep had never seen, but who was 'suitable' because she was the daughter of a rich mandarin and 'well brought-up.' This meant that she had scarcely ever set foot outside her family's home. Naturally, she did not know French. If a man spoke to her she hung her head shyly, answered only with a stammering embarrassment, and bent double to show her humility, holding in her breasts and hips.

"The idea of such a marriage nearly made M. Thiep faint. M. Thiep had met French girls. He had frequented French homes. ***He had had several love-affairs with society girls***. He could no longer look on marriage in the same way as his parents.

"What on earth could he do with a wife submissive as a slave and without two ideas in common with him? What he wanted was a wife who was a comrade, a woman with brains, familiar with life and therefore tolerant. He was not going to find anybody like that in Hué. He knew it very well, and this was why I sometimes saw

him with tears in his eyes when he thought about a Parisian girl, with whom he had fallen really in love.

"Marry her? He could not think of it, for never would his parents accept a White woman as a daughter-in-law. Then leave Annam and marry her in Paris? Perhaps; but that meant breaking with his whole past.

"M. Thiep is very unhappy. He is bored in his own country, where he lacks everything he loves. M, Thiep is a victim of his period: he is in advance of his age. ***And there are plenty of Messieurs Thieps in Indo-China***."

I may say, in passing, that I think M. Jean Dorsenne both rather hard on our "society girls," who are not in the habit of having ***love-affairs*** with Annamite students, however warm a welcome France may give them; and also rather hard on the marriageable girls of the Annamite aristocracy. Crushed though they may be by the weight of Confucian tradition, I believe they are quite capable of a rapid evolution, given Europeanised husbands.

But meanwhile such a metamorphosis remains to be accomplished in them; and the Yellow Werthers thirst for immediate happiness. They are dazzled by the already triumphant White woman.

V

One night I was taking my usual walk round the deck before going to bed. I was on board a liner on the West African service and my companion was a high official who has held important posts in the Congo and elsewhere. He spoke to me as follows:

"Novels have been written about the Black soldier who fought in the Great War in Europe, and whose military reputation spread through a whole district of the jungle on his return home after his service.

"A parallel novel might be written which would be much more realistic and more up-to-date. It would be the true story of a Black African who serves in peace-time in a garrison-town in the French provinces. There he has been singled out by a person of the fair sex, ***a lady in White society***; or so he sees his conquest. Sometimes he puts the term into the plural: his conquests. He has had the honour of being the 'boy friend' of one or more White women, whose motives were not always mercenary. For that matter, where would he get much money?

"You may say that perhaps he is simply a romancer, a liar. To a certain extent. He embroiders. But the unsophisticated statements made to ***me personally*** by many time-expired men have struck me because they were so assured, so definite. Moreover, the women whose names and addresses they gave me, at Rennes or at Carpentras, for example, were no prostitutes; nor were they poor women.

"Some of them were married women, wives of the provincial aristocracy. Some of them were unmarried girls—or, rather, old maids of independent means. ***It was almost unbelievable***. But the childishness of the big fellows who told me about these clandestine—or almost public—love-affairs of theirs guaranteed that they were speaking the truth.

"When I questioned these rascals and made them confess to me, it was as a result of admiring rumours which had spread far and wide among the natives after the men concerned had ***told the story of their amorous adventures*** at a big palaver.

"Any such man became a hero to his whole audience, and was henceforth at least as much respected as though he had come back from the war. Indeed, the victories he had gained made a far greater appeal to his hearers' imagination. Besides, kindly fel-

low, he wound up his story by telling the others: 'You'll see when you go yourselves. Over there White women and Black men going together isn't forbidden. Fine, my friends!'

"So, of course, the spirit of emulation awakened. One contingent of recruits after another embarked in the conviction that a life of flattering pleasures lay before them. Even in the colony itself, young Blacks became bold towards resident White women.

"Fortunately, women living in the colonies aren't so reckless as those at home, who don't even realise racial difference, and so they put the impudent fellows sternly back in their place. Nevertheless, I've already witnessed some really disturbing cases of persecution, and I don't know where this process of evolution is going to lead in the immediate future. ***In Africa to-morrow it's going to be a very burning question***.

"The most typical case in this respect I've seen was the regular love-sickness of one of my Blacks back from France—back from the paradise of military love-affairs. The fellow had acquired a taste for White flesh and he wouldn't look at the women of his own colour any longer. He simply wasted away with continence.

"His passion in a void finally concentrated upon a highly respectable French-woman in the full flower of her beauty, the wife of an official. He wasn't aggressive, all the less so because he felt she was unassailable; but he pestered her with ridiculous attentions, with a whole series of sillinesses which everybody around her couldn't help noticing.

"The thing came to a head thanks to an apparently fortuitous incident. The village where the official was then living caught fire. I won't say that my Black Werther set fire to it, though I'm not sure that he didn't. In any case, it was he who saved the woman of his dreams from the flames.

"And very nice of him, wasn't it? Yes, but as soon as he was the better of his burns he came and claimed his reward; and it wasn't a medal he wanted. This time we had a hard job to master him; for he really thought it outrageously unfair that he shouldn't have the woman who was indebted to him, and his melancholy, now that it had been through the flames, turned into a furious frenzy.

"I had to transfer him under close guard to another district, and forbid him to come back as long as the White woman was still there."

VI

Association of ideas inevitably reminds me of somewhere on the opposite side of the world to Black Africa: the Purple Hills outside Nanking, and in particular the one on which stands the majestic tomb of Sun-Yat-Sen.

I was climbing up the great staircase that leads to it, and I decided to sit down on one of the stone benches to get my breath and to admire the view of Old China. The bench was already occupied by a young man, in the black robe that denotes learning. Big spectacles conferred all a scholar's severity in his round and still childish face. I recognised him as a student, and we saluted one another.

I was just going on again, a few minutes later, when he spoke to me in English. He did not know French; but he happened to be reading a book of ours in a Chinese translation. The book was Emile Zola's ***Nana***.

Warned by my modest experience of the East, I was careful to avoid asking this unexpected reader of that realistic work any questions that might shock him. He was too polite to have told me anything about his impressions of Imperial France as she is described by the author of ***Rougon-Macquart***. But he glanced at me for a second through his glasses; and that glance conveyed to me all that he might have said to an

intimate friend—all the extraordinary feelings which even now the revelation of our Western world provokes in a great-grandson of Confucius.

How his whole heredity, all his inborn ideas, must be upset by Zola's lack of respect towards rulers and judges—and, above all, by his portrait of that dazzling, impudent flower of the Paris slums, Nana, the shameless prostitute, scaling the whole social ladder in an easy-going society from the gutter to theatrical glory, and amusing herself by making Napoleon Ill's senators walk on all fours like poodles!

Zola, indeed, could leave him ignorant of no intimate secret of this White woman who was so much appreciated by White men themselves. The Asiatic student could picture her for himself in all the splendour of her fair flesh, and also in all the refinement of her coquetry. But I would wager that it was not the physical attraction of this foreign woman which made the deepest impression on him. Sensuality is but a brief scene in the sexual drama, and it is soon played out in all countries. What my acquaintance at the Sun-Yat-Sen mausoleum was much more struck to discover, I am sure, was the Western woman; intellectually and ***individually*** emancipated, endowed with initiative, all the more attractive thanks to her liberty, her authority, her sovereign privileges of respect and intangibility.

He could perceive the radiation of this idea, ***due to our whole Christian conception of individuality***, even in the person of a courtesan risen from the gutter. But he must have encountered this idea, so astonishing in his eyes, in other pen-portraits depicting our middle-class or truly upper-class heroines. I was in no way surprised when he said to me, with a highly aristocratic, mandarin-like air of roguery:

"I also know the novels of your Anatole France and those of your Paul Bourget. They interest me very much—very much indeed. . . ."

In November, 1932, a little diplomatic incident stirred Vienna, that capital of operettas. The Chinese Minister protested against the production of a musical comedy entitled ***Mr. Wu***. It introduced a mandarin who killed his daughter because she fell in love with a European.

"A real Chinese girl would have killed herself for shame in such a case," declared the official envoy of the Nanking Republic.

So Japanese women thought, too, when M. Claude Farrère wrote his fine book, ***La Bataille***. But, with all respect to the Chinese Legation in Vienna, everything is changed nowadays in the Far East.

The modern drama of passion for Asiatics is the love, or at least, the desire, of a ***Yellow man*** for a White woman. To-day it is the indignant, jealous Chinese girl who might well say to her father or her brother, the mandarin:

"Why don't you kill yourself for shame?"

Among the most significant testimonies to the interest taken in women of the West by men of the most remote East, I may also mention those big paper panels which are freely sold in Nanking and throughout present-day China.

These panels, mounted on metal rings, are intended to be hung as ornaments in poorer houses. Many business firms give them away in return for coupons. So you find them, soiled by flies and smoke, even in the hovels of almost barbarous peasants.

They are pretty well printed in chromo-lithograph. Their subjects show that China has been won over to a paganism, a nudism, which would certainly have scandalised Confucius, and to a general preference for White beauty. Some of them represent quite young girls, at least half-naked, and with the rest of them clearly indicated under transparent tunics in Greek style. They hold hands, in a romantic garden in which no

detail is Chinese, and, with their short hair floating about their pink and white necks, dance a round-dance like our school-children.

Others are in swim-suits or even stark naked, playing with balloons or simply stretched on sofas, in rooms with European furniture. In these cases, the artist's intention is still more obvious. He has employed the shades most remote from the Asiatic range of physical colouring to tint his bodies; and these bodies are shaped in accordance with European canons.

Their legs are long, stream-lined at ankle and hip. Their figures show those fine curves with which the hereditary wearing of corsets has endowed our women. The areolas around their nipples are rosy circles which the fairest Nordic woman would envy. Their skins are a poem of flower-like Whiteness.

VII

Among the most delightful sea-trips I have had the pleasure of taking figures one from Martinique in the West Indies to the neighbouring British island of Dominica. I took this trip in the little steamer ***Antilles***, belonging to the Compagnie Transatlantique, which had been hired for an excursion.

The excursionists were all Martinique "Coloured people." Though French custom draws no official distinction between the Whites and other races, in practice in the colonies segregation operates of itself. The pure Creoles of Fort-de-France might have liked to pay a visit to Dominica; but they could not stop Blacks and half-breeds going too, and, as they were not entitled to reserve part of the steamer for themselves, they did not go at all.

So, apart from the officers, I was the sole White on board, amid more than five hundred passengers representing the whole range of African pigments, more or less diluted by European blood. They ran from ebony to chocolate, and from coffee-and-milk to pearl-grey.

All of them, excessively respectful to a civilisation alien to their ancestors, had put on their best clothes for the trip. They had, indeed, overdone their ceremonious correctitude, and permitted themselves no negligence at all. After all, what could be more touching?

The gentlemen wore, in broad daylight, something like dinner-jackets, shirts and collars starched and shining like porcelain, black silk bow-ties trimmed with stripes, and resplendently polished shoes. The ladies, save for a few peasant-women faithful to the charming many-coloured cotton-print gown classical among West Indian women, sported ultra-Parisian toilettes. I had never had better occasion to confirm my impression about that world-wide desire of Coloured women which leads them to copy White women.

Lithe, roguish ***doudous***, the ***grisettes*** of the West Indies, in the hope of winning fiancés or lovers, had adorned themselves as though for a ball, in flimsy muslins and satins, bright rose, sky-blue or pistachio-green. These gay shades accentuated the warm tones of their skins, revealed by their low-cut dresses. Of course, they were wearing thick coats of paint and powder, in the belief that they would thus efface the humiliating stigmata of their race. They had not managed to do it; and, quite to the contrary, if many of them struck me as attractive and some as extremely pretty, it was precisely because of their finely ashen or subtly amber skins, which harmonised with the glorious, violent colouring of all the landscape around us.

In tropical light, in fact, real White women look livid. These mulatto women shone like island fruit. In my eyes, they were a painter's dream come true, and I never

got tired of admiring their silhouettes as they leant over the bulwarks against a background of blue ocean.

The Caribbean Sea was delightfully calm, and the temperature ideally cool. Our trip from one lovely island to another and back passed off perfectly, first in a sunlit day and then in a fine moonlit night.

Early in the morning a band started playing ***biguins***, and all the young people on board gathered to dance in the stern, in a space as small as that of a Montmartre cabaret. They kept on dancing all the way there and all the way back. When the violin and saxophone-players stopped for a snack, an obliging pianist took their place. Tall, slim, serious youths swayed tirelessly with girls with supple figures and shoulders smooth as marble. Nothing could be more voluptuous than this spectacle; but at the same time it was quite innocent, quite sober. The genius of rhythm reigned in everybody, and it excluded those elements of the ugly, the absurd and the obscene which are unhappily only too common when Whites frisk about to these Martinique melodies.

Such was the atmosphere when the dancing was interrupted for a few amateur "turns." A young tenor who swallowed his "r's" sang snatches of opera. Then the door of a cabin opened; and a quadroon girl, well-known among ladies of easy virtue in Fort-de-France, leapt out half-naked, in one of those feather-girdles which won Josephine Baker such success in Paris and Evelyn Dove in London.

She started performing a frantic ***bamboula***, wriggling her hips and shaking all her other charms, just like these "stars." But here the audience was not made up of cold-blooded Nordics, persons profane to this old Guinea ritual. Little by little, the spectators came to accompany the dance with clucks and cries and stamps, until the whole show acquired, in my eyes, unparalleled realism. In this ***doudou*** all the heredity of the savage woman became apparent to me.

This did not lead me to feel disgust or contempt. But I could hear somebody sighing and grumbling beside me; and all at once he turned aside and made way for himself through the circle of onlookers gathered round the dance-floor. I took a good look at him. A little later, I found him right up in the bow, staring out to sea in a dejected attitude. I could not forbear to question him. He was a light-complexioned mulatto, and I took him to be a civil servant, very tastefully attired and with his hair well smeared with brilliantine.

He looked at me with deeply pained, unhappy eyes.

"And so," he said, "all the efforts the best of us have made, ever since the Coloured men were freed, have not eradicated that bestial ferment in us. My brethren still sacrifice to the demons of Africa. Always they revert to the jungle. Victor Schoelcher was quite right when he said that slavery makes the soul vile beyond hope of uplift."

"You didn't like that dancer's exhibition?" I ventured.

He trembled with rage.

"Please let me forget it," he begged. "That obscene spectacle made me sick. I wonder she wasn't ashamed . . . And all those other idiots applauding her, instead of reproving her, as she deserved . . . They're all brutes, regular Negroes . . . What's the good of giving them freedom, education, the vote? What's the good of the money that girl earns, what's the good of the shops in La Savane where she can buy the latest fashions of our mother-land, if she's only happy when she's wearing a loin-cloth, like her ancestors three hundred years ago?"

I felt that his distress deserved all my sympathy, and all my compunction.

"So you prefer feminine beauty in the Continental French style?" I asked.

"Is there any other kind of beauty?" retorted the poor mulatto, so simply, so passionately sincere in his conviction that I didn't even try to argue with him.

VIII

I was at a big dinner-party in Canton, to which some mandarins had invited me. The bamboo-shoots were tender, and the sharks' fins were delectable.

We were observing the custom of "no heel-taps" in the Chinese manner, which is comparable with the ***skol*** of the Scandinavians and many another venerable national tradition. One of the guests would suddenly stare gaily at another sitting opposite him. Raising his glass full of brandy, he would cry a fateful word: "***Kam-pé***!"

The other man was bound to respond: "***Kam-pé***!" with a delighted smile, and proceed to imitate his challenger, who gulped his glassful down and turned the empty glass upside down by way of testifying to his exploit.

There are various artifices for dodging the inconvenience likely to arise from any number of "***Kam-pés***" in the course of a meal lasting two or three hours. One of the most astute consists in holding the spirit in your mouth, and then, when nobody is looking, silently regurgitating it into another glass, really intended to contain water.

But a moment arrives when all the glasses in front of you—poor you!—are filled to the brim to test your capacity; and they are all full of that deadly drink. An officious "boy" mercilessly makes sure of the level of your brandy—which, by way of rounding off your happiness, is more or less adulterated.

Then "***kam-pé***" after "***kam-pé***," toast after toast, is addressed to you by generals and judges whom it would be imprudent to insult; for they hold the power of high and low justice, and to them shooting a man is just a joke.

So you have to drink and drink. Freedom of conversation soon follows. The guests with the poorest heads, or the shrewdest wits, slide under the table, whence conscientious servants carry them away to handy beds.

That night, I had managed pretty well. I was still quite clear headed when chance started my neighbours, already well-oiled, talking about their wives: usually a subject abhorred by all Orientals.

I shall never forget the pride with which a great personage in Chinese politics proclaimed:

"My wife is a Russian. She's a European, a White woman."

"And mine was brought up by the good French nuns," retorted a colonel renowned for his heavy fist.

He added, with manifest pride:

"She's quite the style of a Parisian lady."

Hereupon a third Yellow guest, a journalist who had lived a long time in France, clasped me round the shoulders in his brandy-inspired enthusiasm; and he whispered in my ear:

Ah, how I wish I could see my little girl friends of the Latin quarter again! How I long for Pascal's dance-hall, and the girls of the rue Cujas and Montparnasse!"

These three hearts' cries, spontaneous and simultaneous, expressed a unanimous eulogy of the White woman, accomplished in carnal charm. It was a eulogy which might have made me feel ashamed—but I, too, was in a state of euphoria which transcended certain scruples.

IX

At Surakarta, just the same as everywhere else, I had only to observe the masculine younger generation in order to confirm my impression of the existence of that ***new factor***: the intellectual transformation in Coloured young men, who have been won over to admiration, to ***preference for White women***.

Several sultans whose guest I was all had a number of sons. These Javanese princes were sent to be educated at the university of Batavia, sometimes even at universities in Holland. So they, too, in Amsterdam—and in London and Paris ***en route***—discovered the West: our fashions, our pleasures, our Venuses; and, after that, they went back to Java.

What an opening of their eyes it meant, what a revolt against the barbarism of their ancestors, what a tragedy in their minds, henceforth divided and misunderstood!

One of them struck me as summing up the crisis in all his brethren, thanks to his exceptional sensitiveness. He was a handsome fellow of twenty-five, with a fine figure and an expressive, obviously sad face. Governor-General van Jonghe's aide-de-camp had mentioned him to me as "Prince Charming"; and I found him charming indeed.

He spoke Dutch, German, English and French quite correctly. His pale complexion, suffused with a subtle touch of olive, had rather favoured him with the ladies at Spa and Ostend. Sometimes he disappears from home for a fling in Surabaya, the cosmopolitan port of Java, which possesses a Moulin-Rouge on the Paris model. In the highest colonial society certain European ladies have accepted his attentions out of caprice—but only for so long as a caprice lasts.

Sometimes I saw him wearing the classical ***sarong***, with a kind of transparent ***tarbush*** on his head and his feet bare: a regular lord of old Malaya. Sometimes I saw him in the full-dress uniform of the Dutch army, in which he held the rank of colonel, wearing Hellstern boots.

I have a photograph of him in this particular costume. In his hand, quite romantically, he is holding a big rose. I often look at this photograph, and think of the fate of aristocratic, attractive men like him—stifled in between two worlds, with no hope of ever achieving full self-satisfaction.

Out there in Java, this Prince Charming is ***one*** of the heirs-presumptive of his father, the sultan. In other words, for the sake of becoming a king—and a king under tutelage—he runs a constant risk of being poisoned: a method of settling the order of succession which is even more in vogue in Java than in Siam.

Every year quite a number of princes and princesses go to bed apparently quite well, and are found dead at dawn. So nobody ever drinks out of anything but glasses with lids, served by domestics who are above suspicion. A princess sitting beside me at supper one night refrained from eating one of the courses, just because one of my companions had innocently passed the plate to her. This was by no means xenophobia on her part.

My prince with the rose, I am sure, would rather renounce his chance of succeeding some day to the sultan's spiral palace, the hundred sultanas and the royal bed enclosed in ground glass. He would prefer exile in a mill beside the Zuyder Zee, in company with a beautiful Dutch girl after the style of Rubens.

We have already met the Black Werther and the Yellow Werther. I take this Prince Charming as the incarnation of the Brown Werther.

In Bangkok and Canton, among other places, I have visited lower-class opium-dens. They were vast, low rooms, in which the pungent odour of the drug compensated for the stench of Asiatic dirtiness.

At the entrance was the cash-desk, where you paid for a coarse pipe and a little opium, reduced in potency through having been smoked once already by a wealthier addict. Beyond it extended big plank-beds, on which the smokers sprawled on the bare boards in threes and fours, with their feet propped on one another's bodies.

Here I saw the most extraordinary pictures of misery, and of ecstasy: emaciated faces and frames steeped in the blessed poison and consoled by it. It conveyed to them, still on earth, the most desirable of celestial visions: the possession, in imagination, of all reality.

The frightful human wrecks who spent the night in these dens, before starting another day's exhausting toil, were able thus to escape from their misfortune. They became rajahs, emperors. No ambition was beyond the reach of their half-sleep, or rather their philosophical meditation. They had but to wish, and dreams made their wishes come true.

Policemen who knew this rabble well confided to me that ***one of the visions most commonly evoked by the opium-smokers was the White woman***.

Whether they summoned her to their imaginary thrones in order to share it with her, or, on the contrary, in order to have her tortured and gloat in Oriental fashion while she was torn to pieces, shred by shred, ***in any case it was she whom they desired***.

Afterwards, through a process of mythomania peculiar to the drug, they sometimes confused their dream-experiences with the authentic thread of their lives, and boasted about their amorous conquests or their sadistic triumphs, ***so much so that the police took them seriously*** and started investigations.

X

"The Road to Shanghai" from the north is the ***via dolorosa*** followed by such Siberian girls, pretty but poor, who were born and grew up in Northern Manchuria, and then proceed to offer themselves to the lust of Chinese rich enough to buy their White flesh.

When they make their first appearance, for all their worldly goods they have simply their radiant beauty and a rag to cover it. How did they manage to survive and develop from the days of dreadful destitution of their early infancy? It is a mystery of the human flower, which after all clings more obstinately to life than the real flower, even Catullus's flower, ***quem mulcent aurae***, ***furmat sol***, ***educat imber,*** caressed by the breeze, strengthened by the sun, opened by the rain.

Harbin is the principal place where their femininity comes to flower. There, in the great city which sprang up after the Russian revolution through furious competition between the Czarists and the Bolsheviks, with its temperature of 60 degrees of frost in winter and no degrees of heat during its brief summer, they initiate themselves into international debauchery.

They learn that catechism of physical pleasure which is so sadly short, so sadly the same, all over the world: "Dance with partners who disgust you. Whether you are thirsty or not, drink strong spirits, which will sometimes whip you into wild gaiety, sometimes make you sodden and kill you. Practise what they call love: that is, surrender your body to embraces which may sometimes leave you indifferent—if you are lucky—but will more often sicken you and burn you." They find out for themselves the art of suiting their hair and their clothes to such advantages as Venus has bestowed on them, thus making the most of their market value.

The local coming and going teaches them how to extract dollars from the furred ***chouba*** of a Hungutze or the blouse of a man of the Baikal. In cabarets where shows are staged, the orchestras din into them the latest tunes, those melodies of languor and desire, made to the measure of the hearts of all the world, which are imported in the Far East almost as soon as they are launched in London, Paris or New York.

They acquire an essential minimum of wardrobe and ways. They learn to talk that Anglo-Chinese jargon known as "pidgin." They exhibit themselves at midnight shows in nothing but a loincloth. They take a pride in their youthful nudity. Then a first summons from wealthy China lures them and carries them off like a lover. It may be only a preliminary adventure, or it may be an immediately decisive turn in their lives.

Some of them take the train coming from Mongolia, cross the whole of the old Empire from north to south, and never stop till they reach that great Babylon of debauchery, Shanghai itself. But this is rare. It requires prodigious physical attraction or unusual brains, a spontaneous glory of femininity which will fire with enthusiasm the swarm of beaters-up.

These beaters-up are usually European Russians, middle-aged, well educated, men of good birth banished, ruined and reduced to despair by Bolshevism. They make use of their accomplishments as Nordic Don Juans to enjoy the first fruits of these pretty girls; for the Siberian woman, cold and calculating with the males of any other race, will fall madly in love with a real Russian. But these men have no money wherewith to keep the girls, so they hand them on to Yellow men.

As a rule, these girls first make for Mukden. There they find a different environment, where they can make more of themselves and forget how wretched they once were—better so than at Harbin, which is really rather too Slav, rather too provincial, a whirlpool of strange faces congested with lust.

Mukden, until not so long ago, was the capital of Marshals Chang-Tso-Lin and Chang-Hsaio-Liang, father and son, the heads of an army always half-mutinous and given to pillaging. They were feudal sovereigns who had to be indulgent towards the exactions of their luxurious General Staff. Young generals and colonels raided far and wide, and then came to Mukden to set up an alibi and get rid of their share of the loot.

To-day it is the swarming-point for all the intriguers of Manchukuo, that fictitious State of Manchuria set up by the business men and the military party of Japan to mask obvious annexation. Together with delegates of the Tokio Government and industrial experts of the two Japanese financial trusts, Mitsubishi and Mitsui, the Osaka Merchandise, ***et cetera***, all the cosmopolitan vultures of the Far East, salesmen, agents, middlemen, have descended upon certain hotels and the Foreign Settlement.

There are any number of geisha-houses, where men go to discuss contracts while they enjoy ***sukiyaki***, that fricassee of meat and vegetables cooked by the guests themselves in a chafing-dish. But the dance-halls frequented by White women are much more popular.

Here the girls are eyed and valued by traffickers, with a sprinkling of police spies. At the night-haunts where they take part in "turns," which reveal their milky skin to the utmost, they come into direct contact with the fanciers they really want: rich Chinese. They may even find real lovers who proceed to marry them and make them the mistresses of estates in the forests of Chengking or the farmlands of Korea. Or else they set off again and take a leap to Pekin or Tientsin.

Pekin is a much more exciting mart in which to play with the stake of feminine flesh. More highly endowed women make their first appearance there in fashionable frocks which set off their natural charms ; pearls they already possess. Blonde, perfumed, radiant, they install themselves in the big hotels and get elegant ***attachés*** from

the Legation quarter to take them to the clubs. They end by accepting the clandestine attentions of some old mandarin of the Hutungs or some landowner in Paotingfu. The medium of this godsend may be a lift-man or a rickshaw-coolie.

Women more modestly endowed manage to get into touch with the sons, still rich, of families of the old imperial nobility: young men at a loose end, studying the Chinese classics and playing golf at one and the same time. They meet at various cabarets in Hata-Men.

All these women, making use of their wonderful gift for languages, have learned to coo respectably in English, French and sometimes German, and have acquired an essential vocabulary in the more popular Chinese dialects. They are in a position to say to any Yellow man: "Give me more money! If you're not nice to me, you'll never see me again," and so on, in accordance with the eternal dialogue of mercenary love.

Now they are ready, if they have not yet struck lucky, to go and stake still farther south, in that metropolis about which they all dream, that great arena for prostitutes, Shanghai the Damned.

They go there by sea, on board some comfortable Japanese coaster, or by the still more luxurious "Blue Train," which is now and then held to ransom by brigands. Some of them stop on the way at Nanking to satisfy the immediate needs of the officers stationed there.

Once in Shanghai, they expand into full flower. They find life on the American scale around the skyscrapers on the Bund, in the hotel lounges, and in the luxury restaurants and the hectic Russian "taxi-dancings."

They become the idols to whom incense is burned by midshipmen of the cruisers moored in the Wangpu, by Cantonese bankers, by millionaire opium-smugglers. They can reckon, in the twinkling of an eye, the price of one of their kisses in gold dollars, in pounds sterling, in paper francs, in Chinese taels, in Hong Kong dollars, or in Mexican dollars; in "big money," which constitutes a considerable weight of dirt in old, torn notes, or in "small money," which is a handful of silver coins usually defaced, nibbled away, blacked or turned into shells filled with lead by counterfeiters. They begin to feel passionate themselves, with all the incurable neurasthenia of their race; and, in their turn, they buy the frenzied embraces of some Russian sponger picked up at the dog-racing track, or some Russian detective in the pay of a Chinese nabob afraid of kidnapping.

To be sure, at every halt on their long road, bordered by pagodas, armoured cars and gambling-dens, there are victims who retire from competition.

Some of them simply disappear, and nobody ever solves the mystery of their fate. They may have been carried off and raped to death by soldiers who have turned bandits. They may have fallen down dead when they went out into the terrible cold after getting drunk at some dismal orgy. They may have died all alone in some hole, if they have been stricken by illness and lost their looks. They may have died of hunger, or at the hands of some brute of a bully who kills his bird that lays golden eggs.

Some of them go back to Harbin. They grow old there as dressers and servants of their younger sisters, to whom they tell tales of the Road, and whom they train to avoid their own mistakes. Others settle down in little Chinese towns which you reach by extraordinary provincial railways, with engines and carriages falling to pieces and stuck together with bits of wood and iron, wheezing their way along shaky tracks and carrying swarms of coolies perched even on top.

Shanghai remains the battle-ground of the more fortunate. There they can take advantage of the eternal extravagance of speculators.

If they happen to be clever, they get somebody to finance them and set up a manicure establishment or a restaurant. But the Russian inability to keep money promptly throws them back into the ranks of prostitution. Almost all of them are exploited by Russian Jews, who get them into debt, take a percentage on their earnings and, when they grow older, make them manageresses of shops.

Otherwise, when they grow old with no savings, having burned thousands of dollars like cigarettes, they kill themselves with opium, or even sink to selling themselves wretchedly in the brothels for sailors kept by Japanese behind North Szechuen road, in the depths of the suburb of Chapei. Enjoyment in the arms of a Russian woman—who, after all, is still a White woman—may come to cost less, in this infernal environment, than in those of a woman of Korea or Formosa.

This feminine flood, however, spreads even farther south. The Road goes on, beyond Shanghai. The daughters of Harbin, leaving temperate China, independent China, behind them, go and prostitute themselves with Coloured men in tropical lands colonised by the Whites.

Such is the Road, from end to end. Now let us glance at the struggles that are waged along it.

In the struggle between the White woman and the Yellow man who takes a fancy to her, the question arises: "Can a Coloured man really experience physical desire for a White woman and can he enjoy real satisfaction with her, or any authentic joy of love?"

There is also a subsidiary question: "Can a White woman have satisfactory sexual relations with a Coloured man, and become so attached to him that she eventually loves him?"

Or, if we combine the two questions: "Can there exist ***between two races*** real ***sex-appeal***: a sexual attraction which is not simply illusory; a sexual attraction which transcends the artificial temptation provoked by the admiration of a backward race for a more civilised one—in other words, merely what we might call 'racial snobbery'?"

Then there is the struggle between the White woman and all the other Coloured people, men and women: jealous rivals, or conservative, xenophobe persons, who react unfavourably to what they regard as the treachery of one of their racial brethren, and so give the foreign woman a poor reception.

Finally, there are the relations, more or less dramatic, of the White woman and her Coloured lover—whether they are only superficially, or really, in harmony—with a third possible protagonist: ***a White man*** who falls in love with the White woman, or resents what he regards as her degradation, and sets himself to thwart her.

To breathe life into the above summary, let me quote a few actual cases which were given to me, or of which I myself caught a glimpse through personal contact with those concerned while I was covering, for thousands of miles, the highways and the byways of "the Road."

Railway lines, steamship lines, cosmopolitan seaports, air-ports, police headquarters, gaming-houses and brothels, opium-dens, music-halls, dance-halls with partners for hire, dubious bars—all these are the battle-grounds, the scenes of triumph or tragedy, of the dazzling, graceful, feline amazons who sometimes honoured me with their confidence.

There were beautiful, serious Sophie and sarcastic Koukla, who were my friends—simply my friends—in Shanghai. There was statuesque Tamara, who awaited happiness in her mysterious curio-shop in the Street of the Legations in Pekin, and who on Sundays shook cocktails for Mongol princesses—princesses again—

at the house of a French journalist, at Pi-Yung-Tze. I can recall any number of sisters of theirs, all very different.

As for the struggle between a White woman and her Coloured lover, it is easy to realise the cruel lengths to which it may be carried when you recall the harshness of Musulman and Brahman husbands towards wives of their own religion (let us bear in mind Mrs. Catherine Mayo's revelations), and of Chinese masters towards their child-slaves, the ***mui-tsai*** (in which connection read Mrs. Haselwood's book).

Or I might instance the tragic marriages of so many European women to Orientals supposed to be "quite Parisian": for example, the case of Princess Fahmy, who in self-defence was reduced to killing her sadist husband in a London hotel, and was acquitted by a British jury, unindulgent though such juries are towards "crimes of passion"; or the case, less well known, but all the more painful, of another Frenchwoman married to a rajah, who made up his mind to get rid of her not by divorce, but by poison—a fate which she only just escaped.

I could multiply stories of this kind. But, on the other hand, they concern mixed marriages which lasted for some time without a breach. Let us stick to Asia and to Siberian girls, who are models of endurance and have an astonishing capacity for assimilation.

XI

Several Siberian girls, and even European Russian girls, married into the Siamese aristocracy. One of them, indeed, was for some time Crown Princess of Siam. To-day, a widow with two children, she lives in retirement in France, on a pension allowed her by the Siamese Government. She can look back on a not unhappy marriage. Incidentally, it is to her, in memory of the Court of the Czar, to which she really had the ***entrée***, that the Court at Bangkok owes its rigid system of etiquette, which I sometimes found a nuisance during official journeys in Siam.

As a rule, the woman seems to secure from the man only that minimum of respect which enables her to continue resignedly to cohabit with him. But, after all, the same thing happens in any number of unions between people of the same race. It would be rash to draw conclusions from a few scandals, such as have also occurred among pure Whites.

One of the first and most marked results of mixed marriage, however, is the state of isolation in which the White woman finds herself so far as White society is concerned: an isolation which she sometimes deliberately makes worse out of ***amour-propre***.

In a little port in South China, where my coasting steamer called, I was entertained by the chief Customs officer, a Russian ***émigré*** from Soviet Siberia. He was a very hospitable, nice fellow. When I told him that I was returning to North China, he asked me to make inquiries about his daughter, whom he had left in Tang-Ku in a business job. He had not heard from her for a year, and was afraid that the Bolsheviks might have captured her.

On my arrival at Tang-Ku, I went to the address he had given me, from which I was sent to another. Finally I found the girl and gave her a letter from her father. Nothing had happened to her. She had simply got tired of working and had married a Chinese.

She was now "quite comfortable." But she would never have dared to confess this mixed marriage to her family, which was not an accommodating one. She begged me to forget all about my mission and not write to her father. So, of course, I couldn't.

How many White women, however, do not deliberately make mixed marriages, but are driven into them: victims who live in terror, perhaps in despair? Such a victim must have been that charming fair girl, rather Germanic in appearance, a Charlotte without a Werther, lost in the Yellow world, whom I saw on the ferry-boat from Nanking to Pukow and who travelled to Pekin on the same "Blue Train" as myself.

She was the wife of a Chinese. He was refined and well dressed, so far as that went; but he had certainly made no conquest of her heart. I soon gathered that from the furtive glances she gave me when he was not looking. I was anxious to talk to her and ask her about her fate. I made all possible signs to her in the restaurant-car and at the stations where we stopped. I asked the sleeping-car attendant, a Russian, to tell her the number of my compartment. On the last night of the long journey I left my door ajar so that I might hear the least rustle in the corridor, and looked forward to a visit from her. But it was her husband who paced up and down the corridor, a vigilant watch-dog in his silk pelisse, quiet but sinister.

Some of these Asiatic tyrants are more tolerant, and periodically allow the White wives they have bought a kind of "rest-leave," which they spend by themselves in Europe or America. Hence arises a curious variety of trans-oceanic Cinderellas, well known to liner officers, whose leisure hours they charm away.

As a rule, however, their husbands provide them with women-servants or "boys," whose duty it is to spy on them. They treat themselves to a few weeks of frantic freedom in Paris or 'Frisco, and then they sail home to take up their golden Yellow chains again.

I do not feel very anxious about most of the Russian wives of Asiatics. Together with inexhaustible nervous energy, they possess a sobriety of feeling, a capacity for frigidity and egoism, and above all a fatalism, which guarantee them against most weaknesses and should secure them the victory in the common run of struggles.

Whatever may be the impassivity of the Yellows, it is they, as a rule, who can hold out to that "last quarter of an hour" famous ever since Nogi. They are Russians twice over. In them all the disillusionment of Asia is added to the neurasthenia of Muscovy.

The Russian word "***nitchevo***" amounts to nothing in comparison with its equivalent in "pidgin": "***maskee***." When a Shanghai belle murmurs "***maskee***," she is expressing the "Okay" of the Chicago gangster and raising it to its highest power of cynicism. "Everything goes," and nothing matters. A score of men may kill one another around her, the world may collapse; and she will remain indifferent. What does it matter? She is still alive, still able to prey, a ***femme fatale***. She goes her way like a goddess of death, heedless of agony.

"***Maskee***—What does it matter?" . . . I have often promised myself to make this the title of a novel of real life which I dream of writing to the greater glory of these fine, fearful forerunners of the White Venus in Asia. White men who fall in love with them are in much more danger than Yellows; for White men treat them ***as though they were European women***, whereas they were born in icy snow, and they hardened themselves during their puberty among men they despised.

This danger increases in proportion to the moral worth of the rash man concerned. If he is already corrupt and is simply out for amusement, he may get off scot-free—though the Chinese are prompt in dispatching ***ad patres*** anybody who annoys them. But, if he is upright, sincere, kind-hearted, if he takes fire enough to want to save the

fallen angel, if he devotes himself to the impossible task of "rescuing" her, he becomes the pitiful hero of a tragedy which cruelly transposes ***Manon Lescaut***, ***La Dame aux Camélias*** and Tolstoy's ***Resurrection***.

How many poor young naval officers, French and British, ever since the Allied expedition in support of Koltchak in 1918, and afterwards when they happened to be on the China station, have been intoxicated by the glamour of these Siberian girls!

Some of these young men have contented themselves with marrying them and bringing them to Europe. There they wasted away with boredom, once they were out of their native atmosphere of insecurity, and lost their looks and their lustre, though they proved as vicious as caged panthers. Other fascinated lovers have deserted their ships and been swallowed up, together with their stars of perdition, in the lowest ranks of adventurers.

Such was what nearly happened to a young Breton sub-lieutenant who was sent by a sick comrade with a message to a famous Russian beauty. He fell in love with her at sight, and within twenty-four hours of his arrival in Shanghai he had killed a man for the sake of her. Then, thanks to the good sense of his commanding officer, he pulled himself together, and he was transferred without being suspected of the crime. After that, he had a load on his conscience which would ballast him in future navigation.

A case of a different kind was that of a heroic girl named Nadia, who was sold at Mukden, in the flower of her youth, by the handsome Russian to whom she was devoted, body and soul. She managed to escape. This time it was she who killed a man. She returned to her debaucher, and made him so ashamed of himself that she transformed and regenerated him. At least, so I was told; and it may be true. In any case, he would not be the first Russian to swing so suddenly from scoundrelism to virtue.

The tales of the great "Road " are sometimes very touching, even sublime; but most of them are rather ignoble.

Any number of White men play the unflattering role of mere gigolos, allowed the leavings of the feast enjoyed by Yellow men. To some of them the prostitutes pay a percentage of their earnings. This is a less dazzling sidelight on this turbid, exotic life. But even this vile aspect of it concerns us because it emphasises the fact of struggle, of rivalry.

Wherever these White women are to be found, even right in the heart of the Yellow world, far up the great rivers which European shoddy ascends, they have a chance of meeting White men. Then at once racial antagonism springs to life: an affair of outposts in that world-wide racial war which looms ahead of us.

XII

Such antagonism is the more likely to arise because the pride of these gipsies of the "Road to Shanghai" equals their more than professional facility, their almost mystical indifference, in their surrender of their bodies. Even when they are in love, one might think that, in their surrender, they were punishing themselves, mortifying themselves. If they give themselves for love, for a whim, or in a fit of passion, they still require that their favours should be paid for in some way—that their worth should be attested by some ceremonial outlay.

Such was the impression I derived from all the Russian women with whom I came into personal contact in Shanghai. In all the phases of their epic of vice in exile: in diplomatic drawing-rooms; in luxurious "taxi-dancings"; in dance-halls for sailors; and even in low-class brothels—everywhere, whether they had prostituted themselves once and for all or still did so a score of times a day, they preserved an extraordinary

superiority, an astonishing swagger, a kind of perpetual virginity made up of elegance and arrogance.

Side by side with her mercenary sexual life, every one of them carried on a "love-affair"—in other words, at least a flirtation, much more of the brain than of the heart, in which she treated with a high hand some fellow of whom, nevertheless, she presumably was fond.

With this favourite of hers, the Siberian girl is unselfish. She will give him money if he is in a hole. But she demands that he should spend money on her in public, that he should take her about expensively so that his adoration of her may be paraded.

A girl engaged at a cabaret which closes at midnight gets him to take her, as soon as she is free, to some other cabaret which stays open later. She enters it, escorted by her lover, as an independent customer, a "great lady."

One may imagine what a slight, what an insult, she offers in this way to the Yellow man whose subsidies she accepts—often only in secret. But this kind of treatment happens to go well enough with the subtlety of the Chinese mind. We may look forward to the birth, in honour of White women, of a new masochism in the Celestial Empire, which will have its own literature, its own poets, and will counter-balance the secular sadism of Asia.

One remarkable personage in the race-war, the Russian Jewess, carries her hauteur to the most outrageous lengths when she thinks she has the whip hand; but she deflates and grovels grotesquely if she is afraid. As a rule, she manages to amass a little money without trafficking in her youth, she soon learns to exploit other non-Israelite White women, and, when she has become middle-aged and ugly, buys a lover or a husband very cheaply, and proceeds to terrorise him, as indeed she does all the personnel of her establishments. I have seen some wonderful, not to say monstrous, examples of her in Shanghai and elsewhere.

Here is another case which illustrates the struggle between Yellow men and White men for the conquest of White women. It did not come within my own experience, but I was assured of its authenticity. It occurred on board one of those big river steamers which carry a whole world of adventurers and adventuresses between Hong Kong and Canton, and also up and down the Yangtze.

The first class in these steamers is on the upper deck astern. Like the engine-room, it is protected by bars and sheet-iron against a fusillade from river pirates or a sudden attack by the Chinese passengers, either of which is always possible. In this floating fortress there are very comfortable cabins and large public rooms in which the European passengers, with a sprinkling of wealthy Asiatics, gamble for high stakes and consume high-powered drinks.

Below and farther forward, between decks, swarms a motley multitude of Yellows, who sleep in hammocks or on mats and suck sorbets which are handed to them through slots like those in cells. For this rabble are deemed dangerous, and from the moment of departure they are imprisoned by bolts and bars. They are not allowed out until arrival, and then they disembark between files of soldiers with loaded rifles. Even despite these precautions, steamers are sometimes pillaged ***en route***.

Frequently the gambling, in the third class as well as in the first, turns into what the Americans call a "wild party." Stakes at poker or écarté may involve the ***total*** loss of everything that belongs to a player, including his baggage, his clothes and, if he has one, ***his wife***.

Such was the kind of game which a White man, new to China, was fool enough to play, one night on the Middle Yangtze, against a mild-mannered, but strong-handed

Chinese. The White man, I need scarcely say, had drunk freely. First he won, and, thus emboldened, he proceeded to lose steadily.

He lost everything he had, including his wife, a beautiful White girl who was already asleep in their cabin. He played double or quits and lost again, and his opponent demanded the stakes. The fuddled, bemused White thought he was dreaming, or at least that it was all a joke. But the Chinese whistled for his guard of gunmen, and they hurried up, guns in hand.

The navigation laws, of course, forbid the carrying of fire-arms. But that made no difference to our Chinese, who happened to be both a pirate and a big shareholder in the company to which the steamer belonged. The European section of the crew refused to interfere; for the Yellows threatened to open the between-decks if they did.

So the winner proceeded to take immediate possession of the stakes, whom he had doubtless desired from the moment she came on board. The luckless loser did not need to wait until he was sober to be overwhelmed with shame. He threw himself overboard—one more corpse in the yellow waters of the great river.

History does not relate what became of the White woman. If she was wise, she made the best of it. It is better to be outraged by a Chinese than feed fish. Besides, she was a widow; and, as it is practically fatal for a foreign woman to be left alone in China, the best she could hope for was that her violator would deign to marry her. Then she might have in prospect a fate which turned similarly strong-minded heroines into all but queens.

I was also told about the adventure of a Russian girl who became the wife of a ***tukyun*** in the heart of China. This leading general went to Pekin for some political meeting, met her there, and carried her off. No sooner was she installed in the palace, far from the coast, in Hupeh or Chensi where he reigned as local dictator, than she found herself exposed to the deadly jealousy of his former favourite wife, a Chinese woman of high rank.

A prolonged, pitiable harem intrigue followed. The White woman, luckily for her, could count on the support of some German officers, the ***tukyun's*** military advisers. Thanks to them, she won over a majority of the mandarins.

A charge of adultery, aggravated by treachery, was framed against the Chinese wife. The general loved the White woman, and he credited this charge; or, at least, he took advantage of the opportunity to make a solemn repudiation of the Yellow woman. The fallen wife was sent back to her family. Her father was no courtier by halves. To ingratiate himself with the despot, he condemned his own daughter to the classical punishment of adulterous wives. In other words, she was slowly flayed alive, over a period of days, after first being granted the privilege of blinding, in accordance with tradition. The skin of her forehead was cut lengthwise and at the sides, and this living bandage was pulled down over her eyes.

The victorious Russian girl proceeded to lead a brilliant life as the ***tukyun's*** sultana and inspiration, until a day came when his enemies routed his army. She disappeared when his capital was sacked. She may have been crushed to death as his ***yamen*** collapsed in flames; or she might have become the sport of the hostile soldiery.

Such is the key-note of the chronicles of "the Road." I have heard plenty of stories much more astounding. But you cannot believe everything you hear; nor, on the other hand, should you be too ready to disbelieve everything.

Now let us avoid drawing any moral—it could seldom be an edifying one—from these stories. Let us endeavour to estimate, without prejudice, the importance of the

“Road to Shanghai” (Northern “round”) in the immense march of races towards one another.

Is it a path of peace, or is it a modern extension of the warpath?

The vagabond women who travel it, from its start in the snows to its last by-paths in the tropics; these beautiful Bohemians of Siberia, whose whole philosophy is a consuming despair which the fatalism of ***nitchevo*** and ***maskee*** scarcely suffices to express; these White women at once prouder and more passive than any of their sisters, who accept the worst of marriages without repugnance, perhaps because they know they can never really surrender themselves—are they a disgrace to the White race? Or, on the contrary, in sacrificing themselves, are they doing it a service?

It may be argued that if they were not there, on the spot in Asia and ready to oblige, the Yellows would be more active in endeavouring to get themselves White women from Europe, by way of the Southern “round” of the “Road to Shanghai.” But it may equally be argued that the Yellows would not think it so easy to conquer White women if they had not the example of these born courtesans.

For my part, I am not prepared to launch a general anathema against all these creatures, so beautiful, so attractive, who certainly get more suffering than joy out of life. Even though there should be only one saint among them, even though all the rest of them were unquestionably she-devils, I should still be convinced that their beauty in itself does good, and that they constitute one of the most auspicious elements in the world’s pursuit of an ideal through all its chaotic ugliness.

A subsidiary study which it would be very interesting to pursue is that of the revolution which their presence creates in the heart of old China. Imagine a fair figure from Harbin suddenly introduced in an aristocracy who have remained Chinese, with their houses consisting of parallel blocks of buildings with horned roofs and red-lacquered beams, and low, half-dark rooms, furnished with angular arm-chairs and hard beds! Imagine the scandalisation of Confucianist matrons with mutilated little feet, in the presence of this blonde madwoman who demands a whole lot of cushions and similar finery, veneered furniture, bath-rooms and gramophones!

Doubtless there are some of them, highly assimilative and lacking in personal will-power, who become imitation-Yellow women. They accept pantaloons and blouses, and let themselves be carried about in old sedan-chairs with close-drawn black curtains.

But most of them, on the contrary, emphasise their racial origin. They dazzle their husbands’ families and regenerate them. They dress as they did in Shanghai, in tailor-mades and fashionable frocks transported hundreds of miles on the backs of coolies. They ride astride on horses specially trained to the English trot (Chinese horses amble abominably). They ***get roads constructed***—in Yunnan, for example—so that the motor-cars they demand as presents may be driven about from the feudal cities where they live.

The way in which they create their opportunities, the methods they employ, may be open to question; but apart from thrilling us by their adventurousness, in their widespread exodus they deserve our attention as innovators who blaze the trail for cosmopolitanism.

The “Road to Shanghai” attracts at least as many migrant White women as the “Road to Buenos Aires”—which also, let us bear in mind, leads them through the ***casas*** of Argentina into the homes of Coloured men, Black or Yellow.

The fact which stands out, regardless of the circumstances, is this: ***even in the heart of Asia White women are being introduced into Coloured families***.

Simply by the colour of their skins, simply by virtue of the system of aesthetics of which they are the living models, they upset the social equilibrium of these old peoples, who hitherto, despite the capacity for expansion bestowed on them by their birth and wealth, have remained inert, thanks to the strength of traditions which induced them to vegetate at home, never go abroad, and despise everything foreign.

All-important for us is the process of ferment which is consequently at work in thousands of souls out there: the ferment in the Yellow man ***who sees a White wife***, desirable, divine, ***in his own country***, in the home of a wealthy neighbour. He is not rich enough to get such a wife for himself; but nevertheless he starts longing for one, living only for possession of one.

Such is to-day the dream of youths coming to manhood in every province of China.

To the disturbing, insistent publicity of our "excitation factory" which vaunts the White woman in myriad ways; to the sexual books, the shameless films, the frankly obscene photographs which already inflame these Oriental Werthers—to all this is added that living exaltation of White women: the Siberian girl, impassive, icy, but thereby all the more supreme.

The Chinese youth is attacked by a new "***mal du siècle***": a new romanticism in the Asiatic manner. He disdains and spurns girls of his own colour. He realises that the White woman is the ideal conquest for every ambitious male. He vows that he in his turn will possess one.

If he has not the patient courage to enrich himself at home and then buy one from abroad, he will himself emigrate to regions where he knows such women to be numerous and ***easily won***, as his comrades back from Europe or America have told him. He sets off to win her; and we already have examples of the violence to which he resorts at a pinch.

XIII

I was working on this book one July afternoon in Paris when a visitor called on me unexpectedly.

He was an attractive Irishman, whom I had had as travelling companion between Hong Kong and Shanghai. I liked his lively wit, made up of reaction from English matter-of-factness. After a holiday in Dublin, he was passing through Paris ***en route*** for Marseilles on his way back to China.

He had a long, clean-shaven face, made all the longer by the fact that he was already going bald, bearing the mark of melancholy and good-natured irony. At the end of five minutes, I had told him about the subject of this book, and we were discussing it.

"Did I ever tell you," he said, " that I've got a Chinese woman—a concubine, a mistress, if you like—out in Kwang-tung, and that I'm the father of two little half-breed girls? They're not too Yellow; but the blood's there. Don't you think we're really heading towards a half-breed world? If White men expatriate themselves to the Colonies more and more, in the end they'll reproduce themselves most outside their own race."

"That's one of the factors that may lead to a half-breed world," I replied. "But the urge of Coloured men towards White women is a thousand times more important."

He nodded.

"The fact is," he remarked, "that things are terribly changed."

"The old barriers are tottering," I agreed, "if they're not down already."

The Irishman puffed slowly at his pipe.

"Take myself," he went on, at length. "I belong to the Whitest race you can imagine: almost pure Celt, with a dash of Scandinavian at the most. But I haven't got the blind racial pride of my tribe. I find our White women superficial, artificial and intolerably insolent. For everybody, the finest woman in the world is the one who attracts him. For my part, I prefer Coloured women, even if, theoretically, they are less beautiful or downright ugly. It's my own business, and nobody can raise any objection. For that matter, is there any such thing as an absolutely White woman? Norwegian blondes are much Whiter than Italian brunettes. Then where are you going to draw the frontier according to this White idea? Anybody may be less fair than other people. Anybody may be Coloured, a Chinese or even a Negro, by comparison with somebody else."

"I've no objection to your playing with paradox," I replied, quite calmly. "The sincere, innate, instinctive preference of some White men for the Coloured woman, indeed, is an element by no means negligible in the problem which I am studying. If it were proved to be more general, it would lead one to think that Nature herself favours intermarriage between different races. But I believe that most White men strongly prefer White women. As for Coloured men, you live among them. Do you confirm what I say—that they are increasingly curious about the White woman ever since they discovered her a few years ago?"

"Yes, undoubtedly. She dazzles them."

"We've both travelled. Let's try and paint a rough picture between us of the world as we see it."

"It looks like being a pretty dark picture."

"No matter, so long as it's a true one. Let's begin with Asia. You agree that that's where the great enigma of the moment is to be found?"

"Of course, with all its multitudes awakening to modern life."

"They're learning how strong they are, and at the same time they're acquiring new tastes. We've taught them hygiene. So infantile mortality is diminishing, and so are the ravages of epidemics. We've taught them better farming and the elements of co-operation. So famines, which used to be so deadly, are now much less so."

"And that's a great pity, my dear fellow. Thanks to all these blessed scourges, the excess of population used to disappear. If Chinese babies stop dying in droves, if plague is checked and all the beggars are fed, what's China going to be a score of years hence?"

"She's going to be an enormous Yellow volcano; and it will erupt. Already more and more Chinese emigrate every year. They feel that they can't make a living at home any more—just because ***they're no longer content*** with the vegetative life of their fathers before them."

"Yes, that's the whole problem, isn't it? The coolies have been told they can do better for themselves elsewhere."

"And Japan, on the other side of the Yellow Sea, is worse still. The progress of civilisation there has been simply miraculous. Japan has a million surplus births a year, and she spends all her time studying the West. The whole Japanese people, who used to be so simple, have gone mad with megalomania. The lowest-class Japanese belonging to the surplus million wants to 'live his own life.' He despises the rice-bowl, just as he despises the classical ***mousmee***. He longs for all the superfluities that the Whites possess. Those industrialised islands strike me as looking like a raft overloaded with starving, desperate castaways, and at the same time like a warship ready to fight to the death."

"An attractive prospect for us, isn't it?"

"The rest of Asia and Africa are more backward. Still, there too you find multitudes of Browns and Blacks, from Java to Turkestan and Senegambia, who are beginning to hearken to the gospel of ambition and illimitable enjoyment. At the same time, our colonial system is degenerating into mere routine. If the colonising nations become weak at home, we know in advance what is going to happen in all directions: rebellion, anarchy, massacre. Once more, feudal bands will fight among themselves and ravage all settled territory. That will take the place of the peace now imposed by the Whites, which makes it safe to travel almost anywhere."

"A bad look-out for tourists, in short."

"Let's turn to White America. She has some idea of the coming danger, because on her own soil she has troublesome Coloured neighbours: Blacks and Yellows. But she's so immersed with business and politics, with racketeers and profiteers; and she's taken a dislike for Europe, because Europe doesn't pay its debts to her."

"Oh, that's just financiers' propaganda and newspaper stories."

"It may be; but plain people believe anything you din into them. As for Europe, the colonising continent, the continent that still has empires overseas—it doesn't realise, it doesn't see anything at all. It's bemused, it's fooled in the same way. It's ***doomed to suicide***. Hatred keeps on growing among the White 'tribes'—I like that expression of yours—each isolated within its own frontiers, in its own language. Yet this hatred is entirely artificial. I should doubt whether French and Germans are born detesting one another."

"I'm not so sure," murmured my Irish friend, "that the Englishman doesn't detest the Irishman just like that."

"Well, if he does," I retorted, "it's an acquired hatred, a fictitious hatred. You've been egged on against one another for centuries by people who counted on your incompatibility of temperament. But, if statesmen, and above all and first of all, professional politicians and money-makers, hadn't set an excessive standard of luxury, ***by way of paying for the sex-appeal of women around them***, then England might merely have ignored Ireland instead of conquering her. That's a much simpler way of getting on with neighbours you don't like."

"I quite agree. I wouldn't have been the first to pick a quarrel."

"I don't suppose you would—unless some ambitious Irishwoman you met at home, or some Englishwoman you saw abroad, had tempted you to do so. Always, everywhere, the fundamental thing is what Brillat-Savarin called the '***sens génésique***': the sexual question. Economic questions are never anything more than a consequence—and a pretext. If we go to the root of things, all our activity in Europe, and all over the world, is conditioned by that over-riding law of Nature: ***reproduction of the species***. Hence, obviously, arises an excess of births, once the natural causes of mortality are combated. Hence also, indirectly, arises the struggle for more wealth, more comfort, more pleasure—even apart from any procreative idea; even among men who avoid child-birth by their wives. We still recognise the law, even when we get round it. Why did the Japanese conquer Manchuria?"

"You've just said why: over-population."

"But their ancestral territory would have sufficed for them if they had practised Malthusianism or heroic self-restraint. No, I tell you: ***these Yellows have discovered the White woman***, with all her coquetry, her costly beauty. They are forgetting their old rules of life, which were ***based on the self-effacement of all women*** except courtesans."

"The ***geishas***," my friend remarked, "are said to have been instituted by a despot who wanted to spur his warriors on and make them more ferocious in battle."

"The real ***geisha*** of modern Japan is the White woman. She is still superhuman, almost inaccessible. So Japanese wives are idealised just like White women, and all the Japanese dream of devoting their lives to love, just like the Whites. But they have not only acquired the habit of paying for the adornment and the amusement of their own women, whether they be wives or prostitutes. They also aspire to possess those more beautiful foreign women, vaunted by international fashion: White women. So they require Mukden, Harbin, Pekin: financial pledges of high value, and also nursery-gardens of beautiful Russian girls."

"Your way of looking at things would have appealed to Dr. Sigismund Freud."

"Look at it from the other side. Why do Europe and America intervene to limit Japanese expansion and save Pekin and Shanghai? Is it really from love of abstract right, and out of consideration for the idealism, the meekness of the Chinese? Let's be fair to our diplomats. There's something of that in it. But what is at stake, above all, is safeguarding the political and financial supremacy of the Whites, which is plainly threatened by this business. Europe and America have gone and colonised abroad in order to pay for the ruinous upkeep of the 'carnal treasure' represented by their women. ***If they were not bound to surround their sexual disturbers of the peace with luxury***, ***all the White nations could live quietly within their own borders***—and you yourself would not be competing, miles away from Ireland, with the natives of Kwang-Tung."

"Well, if White women possess such prestige, isn't it just because they are the women of the conquering race?"

"Not at all. At this very moment the White conquest is proving a fiasco, at least in the sphere of ideas. The Whites once presented themselves to the Coloured as the envoys of the one true God. Then they developed military and mechanical strength. They were able to crush the Coloured races, bellicose and peaceful alike, because they had found the key to power: the system of applied science, which was the work of Descartes, Lavoisier and a few others.

"But, at the same time, they revealed themselves as no less common clay than the conquered, if not commoner: greedy, deceitful, insincere, dishonest, drunken and stupid. For one inspired colonial creator, they sent out a hundred boobies, a hundred hucksters: all the underlings who were promoted to be kings over millions of Yellows and Blacks under their administration; all the failures in business at home who traded the shoddy they couldn't sell anywhere else. Then came the Negro slave-trade and the Opium War.

"In short, nowadays the Coloured have taken the measure of the conquering race; and they condemn it. They respect the great colonial administrators who protected them, educated them, loved them. But ***they despise all the others***. No longer do they believe that a White is necessarily a superman. They know that we were not sent by any God, and that we do not know even as much as themselves about the fleeting problem of metaphysics—still less possess the secret of life in itself or any explanation of fate. They realise that we simply possess certain recipes for utilising raw material and natural forces. And we have had to teach them these recipes; for our colonial laziness made us dependent on their aid. Now they know how to pilot a plane, how to repair it, even how to construct it. They know how to aim a heavy gun.

"Apart from that, what do we possess in the way of superiority to them? Nothing . . . They have their own marvellous monuments, just as good as ours. They have their own literature. They have their own temples. They have their own faiths, which

teach them a smiling fatalism in the presence of the inexplicable: faiths more dignified, more lordly, than our dogmas of humility, despair on earth, and trust in the promise of the world to come. . . . But did I say we possess nothing in the way of superiority to them? Yes, we do: ***we possess the White woman***—and we have turned her into a goddess."

"One up to us, eh?"

"Quite so. It may be one up to us. Let us look facts in the face. In the Yellow East, at least, the White conquest by force has failed. We hold our ground for the sake of what some of us get out of it, and to save our faces; but that is all. In the long run, so far as faith in the upshot of the game goes, the West is beaten. The next stage might have been, ***and may still very well be***, a reaction of the East against us, also by force: a reaction aimed against us at home. But now there is a fresh turn in the game, and we find an unexpected trump-card in our hand. The East straightway trembles and bows down before its sudden discovery: our own idol; the White woman. So perhaps the game may start all over again. . . ."

"Do you really think so?"

"I simply don't know. . . . If we have really shrewd leaders, ***they will make use of this trump-card***. The East, the South, the whole Coloured world will put themselves under our yoke again of their own free-will, out of admiration for our women and desire for them. But who can say what use may be made of this new power of ours to sway these masses? What use do we mean to make of it? In any case, it is a great opportunity in the history of races."

The Irishman knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"But," he suggested, "aren't you overlooking one considerable factor in what you call 'the game' between White and Coloured?"

"What factor do you mean?"

"I mean a system of politics—not to say a system of mysticism, based on faith—half-European, half-Asiatic in its inspiration, half-spiritual, half-brutal, but human enough, adaptable enough, and with enough pretensions to idealism, to attract not only White workers but also Yellow mandarins, not only starving exiles, but also nationalistic millionaires."

"In other words, Russian Communism?"

"Yes, I mean Bolshevism. It has suppressed, at least in theory, any privilege, any luxury, and therefore any idolatry of the wealthy, idle woman. The dream of the Soviets is a transformation of the world into one big workshop, in which everybody will fraternise in ugliness. That's a factor which doesn't fit into your scheme of sexual causality; and a pretty big factor, too."

"You're all wrong," I told him. "Communism is just as sexual as anything else. ***It is***, ***before all else***, ***the clamour of the multitude hitherto kept away from the greatest of human treasures***: ***the free possession of desirable women***. What happened in Russia, to begin with, was this: around a handful of repressed ascetics, exasperated by envy and ambition, rallied the moujiks. They had been robbed of their daughters if they were good-looking; and then, later on, in the snowy streets of St. Petersburg and Moscow they could see these daughters of theirs getting out of luxurious motor-cars, wrapped in furs, and going into cabarets to meet Grand Dukes."

"You're romancing."

"No, I'm not. That's the essential picture of the Russian revolution, and of ***all*** revolutions. Power means the right to women. So we witnessed the orgies of 1917 to 1920: wholesale violation in prisons and cellars, secret cabarets for commissars, ukases proclaiming women common property in rebel towns entered by the Reds.

Then the revolutionary regime settled down. Time compelled even the most sincere Marxists to compromise, not with Capital, that god of straw, but with Sex-appeal, with Venus, the real sovereign. The Russian women have proved that they can remain desirable even without jewellery, even without make-up. They have transferred fashion—this is an interesting point—into the sphere of sport, and into the institution of a sexual code more shamelessly frank, less hypocritical than ours: trial-marriage, quick divorce, legal abortion. In practice, jealousy and venality have certainly kept their place.

"Yes, even in Russia I can still recognise my Venus, I can still .recognise the White woman. In Great Britain and elsewhere it may be she who, by pulling the strings of male puppets through her vote, will become ***the means of neutralising Communism***, which both scares and attracts our old nations, and which even European reactionaries approach by way of Fascism, an insurgent dictatorship in principle exactly similar. We have no modern gospel to set against Bolshevism. But we still have the White woman."

"You turn her to all purposes."

"She is, indeed, inexhaustible and universal. Soviet propaganda in Asia and Africa ***threatens her personally***. For, in the eyes of Coloured men, complete equality with the Whites, as proclaimed by Moscow, ***means free possession of White women***. If no warning voice, no stroke of genius prevents the enormous war which we can feel approaching, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, that item in the Russian decalogue will be the most potent cause, the real cause, of all the bloodshed."

"A war for White women, like the Trojan War, eh?"

"Any observer can see it coming."

My Irish friend got up to go. He laughed, but rather sadly.

"Well," he said, "I'm not going to fight in honour of your sexed angels, your Hollywood 'stars' and your Parisian damsels of Maxim's. These insipid, stupid creatures, to my mind, aren't worth as much as my Chinese wife; and they're certainly not worth any man's blood. You can get yourself killed if you like, my chivalrous French friend. For my part, I shall wait until the enemy land in my green Erin."

"You're quite right," I agreed, with the same sarcasm. "London and Paris will be in danger before Dublin, though Irish women can be charming—I won't return your poor compliment to Parisiennes. The truth about Parisiennes is that their refined beauty, and the pretty wit which they owe to the shining past of France, with all the culture, all the mettle, all the freedom that have flowered in a land at once enchanted and rational above all others, gives them to this very day a renown such as Greek women possessed in the ancient world. Even in the most backward islets in the Antipodes they are dreamed about as creatures of perfect physical beauty and perpetually renewed charm. Paris, with its night-life that is so calumniated by those who know nothing about it; Paris, really so sober, which always keeps its pleasures within the bounds of decorum—Paris, both for those who know it and for those who have still to visit it, remains ***the one and only capital of Desire***. It is to Parisiennes in particular that I shall address my book, amid all the other White women; and here is my dedication . . ."

On the cover of my manuscript I jotted down this dedication:

"Women of my country—my dear Frenchwomen:

"Women of Great Britain or Germany, Italy or Norway, Australia or America, women of ***my race***;

"***White women,*** you who are the most highly charged with sex-appeal, the most desirable in the world—

"***To-morrow the world will be fighting for you***.

"Here is a danger coming which concerns you, a storm blowing up of which you are the cause.

"Here is the fate which approaches you and will weigh heavily on your daughters. Here is war, which your comrades, White men, will be forced to wage in your honour, for your liberty.

"Here is slavery to men of other races, which threatens all of you after your already humiliated sisters of the "Roads" to Shanghai and Buenos Aires.

"Will there, indeed, be any White women left a hundred years hence?

"But you are the most understanding of women. What if your feminine genius should dominate the situation, preserve your race, and solve this almost insoluble imbroglio?

"Then, for all of you, for those who love you, for your countries, for your descendants, it would mean salvation. It would mean that you had embarked upon the most wonderful adventure and won the highest glory which humanity has ever earned since Eve the brunette and Helen the blonde."

CHAPTER XIII

LOVE AND COLOUR

I

HERE I should like to pay a fresh tribute of respect, which they richly deserve, to ***almost all*** the White women who accompany their husbands, whether they be officials, business men or pioneers, to Asia and Africa, accepting all the risks of travel, trying climate, epidemics and insurrection.

People at home lump them all together as "Colonial women," even when they do not live in the Colonies, but in places which are often still more dangerous: semi-barbarous independent States. People at home, moreover, are only too ready to regard these valiant exiles as whimsical, wayward women, all a prey to opium or hysteria.

I pass in silence, and with profound pity, over those ***exceptions*** who fail to stand the strain: women who are indeed disarmed by illness, by weak nerves, and who let themselves go—just as they would have done anywhere else, just as other women do even in Paris or New York.

Such women constitute a minority; for those who go abroad are ***an élite***. It is usually women physically and mentally robust who choose life overseas.

On the other hand, how many regular heroines there are! I am filled with the deepest admiration when I think of all the women whom I have seen strive and suffer, and win in the end, through the sovereign virtue of their smiles, in the most hostile parts of the world.

Wives of French consuls and pioneers in China, isolated in the midst of xenophobe Yellow swarms; wives of district commissioners or officers of native constabulary, living in dilapidated headquarters or unhygienic blockhouses in Senegal, Congo, Madagascar, Tonkin and Guiana, and proving themselves conscientious, cheerful mistresses of their homes despite the stamp of fever on their faces; English wives in India, Dutch wives in Sumatra, American wives in Mindanao, German wives in Tsinanfu—all these I have seen, devoted to helping their husbands, who are sometimes unworthy of them, and to maintaining the prestige of their own countries, which are often cruelly indifferent and ungrateful. I have seen them, and I take off my hat when I think of them.

I must not give away the glorious secrets of those who are still alive; but I may respectfully recall one who is no longer with us. She died, on the battle-field of travel, so to speak, in the loss by fire of a French liner in the Red Sea.

She was a Frenchwoman, a woman of Provence, very handsome, with both depth and wit, endowed with all the physical charm and the intellectual capacity of the finest type of White woman. In a great Asiatic colony, her husband had become head of one of the essential departments of administration. Then he was subjected to what she regarded as an injustice. All one winter I was a friendly, admiring witness of the struggle to right this wrong which she carried on side by side with her husband.

I can still see her during the worst days of this struggle. Her headquarters was her great mansion, with its vast, richly decorated rooms and its silent Yellow menservants. But she was just as much at home in camp in the malarial jungle.

She was nursing a sick child. She was anxious about her husband, who was suffering from a gastric attack. She was well aware of the strength of the hostile interests leagued against her. Nevertheless, she bore up with prodigious good humour and stoi-

cism, using all the weapons of a woman of the world and a politician, winning over influence, finding out what her adversaries were doing and anticipating them, telephoning, telegraphing, always edging her retorts with cutting sarcasm, and threatening to carry the war into the enemy's camp up to the very end.

She must have made them tremble. In the end, they triumphed—but it was thanks to an indefensible situation, not over her. Even then, she did not despair; and when she died she was on her way back to France to try and turn her defeat into victory. She showed me the Colonial woman in her highest personification.

Such women, fortified by years of quasi-military life in the midst of Yellows or Blacks, with every opportunity of studying domestic "boys," native soldiers, ***ramatus***, ***congais***, medicine-men, bonzes and mandarins, cherish no illusions about racial equality.

They encourage their servants by treating them kindly and tactfully; but they carefully avoid any familiarity with them, which they know would be out of place. To them, a man means a White man. The sole reproach which you can sometimes level against them—but you need to live as they do to appreciate their point of view—is that they look down too much on the natives, whom they have to keep on reprimanding for their lies, their trickery and their laziness.

No, these are not the kind of women who are likely to put themselves out of court by allowing any sexual intimacy. Like the lady in the bath whose story I have told earlier, if they sin in this respect it is rather through carelessness. They get into the habit of overlooking the fact that there are such things as males among the natives with whom they have to associate more or less closely.

If you have to undress in a tent, you cannot keep on worrying about whether some blackamoor may be spying on you through a hole in the canvas. Life for a woman in the Colonies would be impossible on any other terms. Here in fact, I think, is to be found the explanation of Mrs. Massie's rash stroll along the Ala Moana. Sometimes a White woman is attacked by the men-animals she sets at defiance, just in the same way as a tamer may be attacked by his wild beasts.

On the contrary, it is women who know nothing about the reality of life overseas, stay-at-home women, who are likely to give credence to a certain legend which has been created and maintained by a whole second-rate literature, and by the entirely false shows presented by the cinema and the music-hall: the legend of the "savage lover"; the legend of the Asiatic or African who is a wonderful, tireless master of the art of love.

Hence arise those cases of infatuated experiment which have unhappily become so numerous nowadays that they alarm sociologists, who have their own reasons for opposing cross-breeding in their own countries.

It is, above all, in France and on the Continent of Europe in general that this happens, much more than in Great Britain and the United States, which are regions traditionally inoculated against inter-racial marriage.

II

"***Se-mu-yu-lo***," I said to the rickshaw-coolie.

In his vernacular, this meant "Sisters Road," which is at the end of Marshal Joffre avenue, and is the address of Marcel B., the "underworld lawyer," a Frenchman whose useful role as arbiter among the "bad eggs" of Shanghai I have explained elsewhere.

My man-horse set off at a fast trot. The wonderful native life of Shanghai started swarming past me like lice. Nevertheless, we went along broad asphalted streets, lined with fine modern buildings. The tricolour flag floated over barracks and hospitals. The Tonkinese policemen who regulated the flow of motor cars wore European uniforms. I was in the French Concession at Shanghai, a great city founded by Great Britain and France, which still belongs to us. But, as most of us do not even know we possess it, some day we shall lose it, without noticing.

Marcel was waiting for me outside his house.

"Don't get out," he shouted. "I'll take another rickshaw, and we'll go to the 'Caveau Montmartre.' "

"At this time of day," I asked. "Before dinner?"

"Yes. Lucien telephoned that he wanted me to make peace between a Negro and Stana, a Siberian girl. You've met her, haven't you?"

We arrived at the night-club which was one of my observation-posts in my study of White women and Yellow men.

At this time, I was not concerning myself much about Blacks. For that matter, there are not very many of them in Shanghai. I had noticed one, the bully of a French girl who had been a chorus-girl and was now a "taxi-girl." But they got on all right together, and I assumed that my poor fellow-countrywoman, shipwrecked in vast Asia through the bankruptcy of some touring company, had looked out, above all, for a man who could speak her own language. The bully in question came from the French West Indies, and so did the one with whom we were now concerned. French Blacks seem to be preferred by the ladies in all countries.

"You've come just at the right time," said Lucien the Chauffeur (a Parisian, wounded in the war, and one of the joint owners of the "Caveau"). "Stana is here. That dirty Nigger of hers has been beating her again. If I didn't hold myself in, I'd soon cure him of wanting to lay a finger on her!"

We went into the back room of the basement, decorated in Pompeiian style, where, from midnight to six o'clock in the morning, I had many a time marvelled at the most extraordinary collection of adventurers of all colours. Though it was now late afternoon, the chilly atmosphere still exhaled a reek of humanity and opium from the night before.

Few of the lights were on, and the only person to be seen was a White girl, a very pretty blonde, sitting at a table, and looking so pale and in such a state of collapse that at first I thought she was drunk or drugged. But, when I got nearer to her, I could see on her face the marks of a fight in which she had not been the winner.

Lucien brought her a glass of brandy and ginger-ale.

"Aren't you ashamed," he asked her, "to let yourself be knocked about like that by a Nigger? Even the Chinese think themselves better than Niggers! But you, a White girl, even though you were born at Harbin—you hand over to that blacking-face the dollars you have so much trouble getting out of Yellows; and all the thanks you get is that he beats you up! Are you crazy? You could find a better protector among the Whites right here, if you didn't stick to that Polynore of yours. For it's you who hang on to him. . . ."

Stana said nothing; but she consumed her drink, and the roses reappeared in her face, though they didn't rub out the bruises. Marcel sermonised her paternally. Lucien kept on being indignant. In his case, male jealousy was added to European ***amour-propre***.

For my part, I studied Stana. I could not convince myself of her degradation. Maltreated and broken though she was, she still radiated that potent sex-appeal of Slav

women, which inspires Westerners with deference as much as desire. She was refined, aristocratic, charming as a real Russian princess. The idea of striking her revolted me like a profanation.

As I have related elsewhere, more than ten thousand White women of the same origin are prostitutes in Shanghai. The rout of the last Czarists and the famine in Siberia started them on their exodus across the immensity of China. They surrendered themselves to coolies in return for a share of their rice. Some of them failed to survive these depths of degradation. Those who did created a new profession: that White prostitution for Yellow custom which sometimes enriches those who practise it, and so nowadays has led to a regular migration of Siberian girls towards Pekin, Shanghai and Canton.

Like courtesans all over the world, these girls have their lovers. But most of them choose White men. Our colour retains at least that privilege.

Lucien had been back to the entrance. He came down again.

"Here's that Nigger monkey of yours coming down," he said. "You warn him that I'll throw him out if I see the least sign of trouble between the two of you."

The "Caveau" was now beginning to attract a sprinkling of prostitutes who had slept all day in some dubious lodging-house, while Shanghai, that Babylon of money-making, went about its business. They "came up for air" at dusk, and dropped in here for an aperitif before scattering among the dance-halls in search of the fifty or one hundred "mex' doll' " (Mexican dollars) which represented their nightly takings.

The men whom they kept accompanied them, and then stayed behind by themselves and waited until the girls reappeared towards dawn: the time for sharing the spoils and going to bed.

I saw a Negro coming down the staircase. He was very black and quite young, with the build of a boxer and quite an American elegance. He walked straight to the bar.

"Polynore!" called Marcel.

The West Indian saw Stana with us. He made a face, but did not venture to refuse to join us. Lucien turned away, clenching his fists.

"Have a drink," said Marcel, in a friendly way. "Look here, my boy, it seems to have been a stormy morning at home. Still, you're French, eh, and that means you're gallant. Poor Stana isn't your slave. So why did you make such a mess of her?"

"It's he who's descended from slaves! He's not fit to be free!" cried the Siberian girl, suddenly shaking off her fatalism.

She jumped up from her chair and ran away into the other room. The Black had turned grey with rage at that word "slave": the deadliest insult she could hurl at him. He started a voluble diatribe against her. Lucien turned round and cut it short.

"That's enough, my boy," he said. "You needn't come back here. I don't want any rows in my place. Understand?"

Polynore was taken aback. Then he sneered:

"If I can't come here, you won't see Stana again either. She won't go where I'm not welcome. Let me tell you that what happens between us is our own business—and also that it's she who runs after me, as you know very well."

In his rage mingled with resentment, he was trembling, stuttering and swallowing his "r's." But we felt that he was telling the truth. This paralysed Lucien, who would otherwise have taken him by the collar.

"All my life it's been the same thing," went on the Negro, now emboldened. "Your White women have always worried me and chased me. For my part, I don't run after them. They all make trouble, and I hate the sight of them. . . . If only I had a

Black woman of my own country here, how happy I should be! I should never have exiled myself to China. Wait till I've got enough money to go home, and you won't see me for smoke!"

By now he was himself again. Vanity and self-satisfaction shone in his eyes as he said: "***They've always chased me***." He drew up his splendid figure, and he looked every inch an African king—as perhaps he was by descent.

At the same time, he wanted to get us on his side. He gave me a smile, friendly and beseeching. I realised all at once that he wasn't just a brute. He had a subtlety, a charm of his own. It was thanks to this that he had attracted that daughter of the snows, divine Stana.

Then, without a word more, he walked out, very dignified.

"By the way," I asked Marcel, "how does he come to be in Shanghai?"

Marcel told me that the Negro had had a job—and so had the lover of the French ex-chorus girl—in a jazz band, which kept things lively in a restaurant in Saigon during the years of prosperity. Then came the slump. The musicians were replaced by a loud-speaker, and they scattered, some to Malaya, some towards the North. The former leader of this Black band had thus been drawn into the whirlpool of Shanghai, where he made an honest living—and a poor one—peddling pharmaceutical products. The junior members of the band lived better, on the favours of Venus; but none of them had yet managed to save the price of his passage to the West Indies. Such was the odyssey of Polynore.

I was still listening to it when an American named Nat, a big fellow already fired by cocktails, came up to Lucien.

"You French are devilish long-suffering," he exclaimed. "Back home the Ku-Klux-Klan would soon settle this scandal of a Negro not only making a White woman 'work' for him, but ill-treating her into the bargain. If you're going to put up with it, there are some of us at the Little Club and elsewhere who'll take it on ourselves to wipe out the insult. Let the fellow look out if I catch him outside now."

Nat disappeared up the staircase. Lucien looked at us in exasperation.

"That's the kind of man who'd kill him," he said. "He'd put us all to shame if he did—and we'd deserve it."

A Fury rushed at him and shook him. It was Stana, transfigured.

"What are you talking about?" she cried. "Where's my man? What have you got against him? Who wants to kill him?"

She vociferated insults, threats, entreaties, in Russian; but the tones of her shrill, despairing voice gave me some idea what she was saying. Lucien pushed her away. She tottered and whirled round, still sobbing and shouting. Everybody there stopped talking and stared at her. She was like an animal robbed of its young. She made wild proclamation of her love, in that aspect of it which is most identical with maternity.

"If he's killed, let them kill me, too!" she wailed, this time in French. "Nobody else shall ever have me—not one of you. You give me the horrors, all of you. I've never loved anybody but him."

Like Polynore and Nat before her, she ran up the winding staircase to the street. Behind her the spectators came to life again. There was a tumult of talk. Some agreed with her, some said she was wrong; but nobody made fun of her. Even more than myself, these filibusters, accustomed as they all were to value women according to their devotion, recognised that Stana was sincerely in love; and they paid such love the tribute of remarkable respect.

Hearing all the noise, the Admiral came down from his room. His name was Paoletti, and he was Lucien's partner. He was a Corsican of sixty, but as well-

preserved as a man of forty; and his advice was much sought after by ladies of all races, now that he had retired from a life of extraordinary ups-and-downs. He had been Chief of Staff to Marshal U-Pei-Fu, who all but became the master of China. He had even given me a general's commission, which I carefully kept in case the old marshal should assemble another army.

The Admiral—he had started his career in the modest uniform of the French Marines: hence his flattering maritime nickname—was told what had happened. As an expert, he could sum it up at once in all its bearings; and he did not condemn Stana.

"Well," he said, "nobody ever made her fall in love with him before. The Negro has managed to do it, and that's all about it. It's not the first case I've heard about. She went with him out of curiosity, thinking it was just caprice; and she's acquired a taste for him. You fellows had your chance of making her happy. . . . And what next? After all, Polynore's a fellow-countryman of ours. Officially he's French. You're not going to let an American take the law into his own hands in our Concession, just as though this were Texas."

Paoletti had said enough. Lucien hastened to the telephone. Several Frenchmen left the "Caveau" to catch up the Black and warn him. We waited, rather anxiously.

Finally Polynore reappeared, safe and sound, and with Stana on his arm into the bargain. The alarm had settled their quarrel. They were billing and cooing like two turtle-doves. Polynore offered a round of drinks, and Stana paid for them. All was in order again.

For my part, not yet being a surfeited spectator, I was left astounded at this fresh demonstration of that great modern happening: the hold of the Coloured man on the White woman. Polynore contrasted with the Siberian girl even more than a Chinese. She was so milky white, and he was so violet-black, like a ripe plum. He was ***different***. I discovered an aspect as yet quite unknown to me of the vast racial problem, whose urgency the "Road to Shanghai" had already shown me.

"How did they ever come together? And, if they are in love, why do they fight?" I asked my companions—though I felt that these questions were really unanswerable.

"There are women who like being beaten. The Nigger has realised that; and, as this is the first time he's ever been ***a master***, he abuses his position—that's all," summed up Lucien, who saw life simply.

"If it comes to that, a White man could give her just as good a beating," objected Marcel.

"No," replied the Admiral. "***He's Black, and she's White***—that's the whole point."

"So this is really something special?" I murmured.

All these veterans of cosmopolitan adventure responded with one accord:

"Yes, it is, rather."

"Good," said I. "In this China of yours, I thought I had seen the White woman with her strangest partner: the Yellow man. Now I see another line of inquiry in prospect; and I have an idea it's a still more painful subject."

They nodded.

"White ladies and Black guys—a Hell of a subject," confirmed the Admiral. "You're sure to displease everybody."

"You think so?"

"If you're for the Negroes, the Americans and the British will be against you. If you're against the Negroes, the French won't agree with you. Whatever you say about them, the Blacks will think you despise them."

"I shall tell just what I see, without taking sides."

"Quite so—and then you'll annoy everybody."

"Well, it can't be helped. I'm just finishing a journey of exploration here in Shanghai. I was told it would be a risky one; but I'm not sorry I started. And now for this fresh expedition, whatever betide. . . ."

"Just a moment. You'll meet more dangerous animals than our bosses of the Traffic in Asia."

"Shall I? Well, I'll take my chance. And I hope all the guilty girls for whom I have to plead will have Stana's splendid excuse: love. In that case, most people in all countries will understand, and even forgive. . . ."

III

To-day, the Black victory seems to be complete. Every capital contains at least one cabaret whose special inspiration is Negro. Harlem has overcome the aloofness of the New Yorkers. In Paris, Montparnasse and Montmartre offer half a dozen such cabarets. In the rue Fontaine, day and night you may see advertisements representing gigantic Blacks embracing half-naked White women in the most lascivious of dance movements.

I may recall the extraordinary popularity achieved by the Negro dance-hall in the rue Blomet. European and even American women flocked to it, sometimes dragging their husbands with them, resigned or furious as the case might be. They earned fine wages for the Negro professional dancers who, as they danced ***biguins*** with them, conveyed to them for the first time that undulation of the belly, that action of the legs as though they were disjointed from the trunk, which hitherto had been exhibited only on the music-hall stage—in short, perhaps, one of those famous "secrets of exotic voluptuousness!"

The spectacle presented by one of such dance-halls becomes still more characteristic later at night, or rather about four o'clock in the morning. By then it is not simply women visitors out for a thrill who revolve in the arms of "darkies." Only women with a real passion for them stay up so late. By this time, too, to the professional dancers of the establishment is added a contingent of amateur dancers, made up of musicians, also Black, who have finished their night's work at other resorts now closed.

These new-comers dance all the more frantically because they do it for love of the thing. Their partners are ***their own women***, their mistresses, ***White women whom they support***, or who, more often, are attached to them out of sheer perversity.

It is difficult not to think that a great revolution is in progress in the world, and that our race is becoming decadent, when you find yourself in the midst of this vortex, dominated by the music of African barbarians, by their bursts of laughter, by their childish or chirting voices, by their odour nauseous in our nostrils, by their musk scent. In such a setting a White man feels almost ashamed to dare to dance. He is less animal, perhaps less capable of attraction. . . .

In Berlin just a few years ago, before the Hitler clean-up, an intimate friend of mine found himself one evening in the company of an exceedingly attractive German girl.

My friend had travelled widely, but rarely had he seen anybody more desirable than this tall, statuesque creature. She may have been pure Aryan; or she may, on the contrary, have had an invisible admixture of Southern or Hebraic blood. In any case, she was a blonde beauty, slim and sporting; and she was at that wonderful age when girls know just what they want, and do just what they want.

They had dined in the Kurfurstendamm, they had seen a film at the "Kapitol." Then, through chilly, misty streets, Hedwige piloted him towards the Motzstrasse, the main artery of Berlin's night-life.

By this time the illumination of the "dance-palaces" lit up the sky, which hung, heavy with snow, above the Gothic buildings. At every other step they took on the frosty sidewalk touts brushed against them, whispering: "Moulin Rouge? Mon Bijou? Mascotte?" Prostitutes wearing Wellington boots, and with sadly servile faces, passed them by, and so did bedizened homosexuals, while luxurious cars went slowly by in ghostly parade. It was Berlin night-life—before Hitler, I repeat—with all its regulated vice, its cosy ugliness: the very antipodes of Parisian lightness of touch.

"All right, I'm yours!" Hedwige promised suddenly, nestling close to her cavalier. "But first let's have an hour at 'Sammy's!"

At "Sammy's," a Negro cabaret in the Kalkreuthstrasse, the jazz-band, the soloists, the musical repertory were identical with those which we applaud in Paris. Yet, from the moment he went in, my friend was conscious of a much more magnetic atmosphere.

The smoke-filled room was packed, and my friend and his companion had difficulty in obtaining half a table, already occupied by bespectacled Brandenburgers. Around them sat square-built Prussians and Saxons, all of them apparently in ecstasies over the "hot singers" from the Mississippi. But the real spectacle was the Berlin women. (Let us admit that they may not have been authentic Aryans either. The Nazis had not yet started their process of selection.)

These ladies, leaning forward in their chairs, with their elbows, if not half their bodies, on the tables, some of them as lithe as panthers, others as bulky as bears, seemed to be in ecstasies, too. All these—at least apparently—White women stared at the Black men, gaping, obsessed.

Yet the state of these women in no way suggested jollity, or even commonplace sensuality. They all had that intensely serious air about them which the Germans take with them to their nudist bathing-parties at Wannsee. They were in the grip of a quasi-religious intoxication. This physical contact which they sought, this odour of the Negro which they drank in through dilated nostrils, were means of aesthetic, almost mystical communion rather than anything else. But my friend did not realise this until he thought about it afterwards. . . .

At the moment he experienced an uneasy feeling which bordered on scandalised jealousy. He blamed Berlin husbands for their fatuous tolerance. Hedwige did not insult him to the extent of dancing with a Negro; but she sat at table like all the other women at this strange ritual feast, and devoured the Blacks at least with her eyes. Then she dragged my friend into the motley throng on the dance-floor; and, as she steered them with soldierly precision, he felt that, in her eyes, ***he had ceased to exist***.

"That's enough!" she exclaimed, all at once. "Let's go. Take me home."

They went out. As a taxi drove them to Hedwige's, the Frenchman felt that she was still fascinated, still remote from him. Disgusted and bad-tempered, he could not refrain from saying:

"So you had to be excited, eh? I'm not good enough to give you a thrill."

She gave a start, and abruptly drew away from him.

"So that's what you think, is it," she cried, "you idiot, you nasty-minded Parisian? Hi, driver, stop! I won't have anything more to do with you. You don't understand me at all."

He had outraged a feeling in her which was far above viciousness. He was ashamed of his low idea, and implored her to forgive him. But she was in no hurry to

do so, and that night she would not let him cross her threshold. She was possessed by another god: the unknown god whom he had blasphemed, the god of the Negro mystery.

IV

It would be unfair to deny the charm and talent of some "high class" Blacks. I know one, nicknamed Dakar, the proprietor of a Montmartre bar, married to a Frenchwoman and the father of half-breed children, who is famous for his urbanity, his politeness, his cosmopolitan sense of entertainment.

He speaks several European languages wittily, can extract melody from every musical instrument imaginable, and suffices all by himself to amuse a score of neurasthenic Americans. How can one help giving his due to this excellent, harmless fellow?

It is easy to understand that, before he got married, he enjoyed that success with the ladies upon which anybody able to amuse them can count. For one of the dominant traits in the life of White women is that they are bored. The great majority of White men are not only incapable of giving their wives physical enjoyment: they do not even know how to entertain them.

So it is explicable that some White women should get to the point of preferring ***even Negroes***.

An Austrian woman of thirty, very attractive, of independent means, used to live alone in Paris. In a charming studio in La Muette she entertained Black men, and nobody but Blacks. This peculiarity of hers became known to the police through the usual medium of her concierge and other informers.

The police wondered whether there might not be some political activity involved—some mysterious propaganda aimed at influencing our African troops. They took advantage of the young woman's neglect to renew her identity card, and paid her a domiciliary visit. All this was told me by a friend of mine in the police.

The Austrian woman was at first confused, but then she frankly confessed that she had to have Black lovers. It was a long-established leaning of hers.

From time to time she felt drawn towards one of these "darkies."

She got hold of one, and then she went through a phase, not of physical disgust, but of purely intellectual shame and remorse. It was in order to have full freedom to satisfy herself in this way that she lived in France.

Other examples are to be found of an equally authentic bent of passion. There was the devotion of the lady who turned up to give evidence in favour of the Negro Lafortune when he was on trial for murder. There was also the recent case of that poor girl who threw up her engagement at a big Paris music-hall and became an ordinary dance-hall "instructress," so that she might live amid the Blacks of the orchestra.

But most cases of a White woman giving herself to a Coloured man, from motives other than mercenary, present the characteristic of curiosity, followed by disillusion. We have already glanced at different elements in these little love-tragedies.

The woman is bored. With her White husband, or her White lover, she fails to experience the satisfaction of which she believes herself capable, or which she used to feel. She is amused by the coaxing childishness of some clever Black dancer. He conveys to her that impression of overwhelming agility, of vertigo, which acts so strongly upon femininity.

Such caprices, thus satisfied once and for all, are in any case exceptional. If we make every allowance for all the longings, all the unavowed dreams of the immense majority of shy women, it remains difficult to believe in any Coloured man arousing a real sexual interest in a White woman.

The attraction of the unknown, the lure of the legendary, and also the scarcity of White men, act upon women condemned to virginity in many French provinces; and probably to this cause alone may be attributed certain affairs, very rare, but also very disconcerting, between highly respectable old maids in some garrison-towns and Senegalese soldiers, splendid physical specimens who take them by storm.

We draft thirty-five thousand Black or Yellow soldiers into France every year, and all these men cannot be kept shut up behind bars like nuns.

La Bruyère wrote that, in the eyes of starving provincial women, in default of aristocratic gallants, a bricklayer became a man. To-day, with the progress of migration, for "bricklayer" he might write "Negro."

Hence, too, arose the numerous affairs between the feminine population and our Blacks during the French occupation of the Rhineland: affairs attested by the birth of half-breed children in maternity hospitals, and even in expensive nursing-homes in Wiesbaden and Mainz. Nobody can suggest that the French military authority exerted any compulsion on women of the Rhineland to surrender themselves in this way; nor was distress such that a Black soldier's pocket-money or bread-ration would repay a girl for the risk of pregnancy.

No, it was a deliberate pursuit of satisfaction, induced by celibacy; and also, perhaps, an urge towards the exotic, induced by that instinct for complementing oneself which is supposed to lead every human being to desire his or her opposite, so that a fair man falls in love with a brunette and a tall man with a small woman.

Even before the war, when a group of Somalis, French subjects, were sent to take part in an exhibition in Germany, these fine fellows, the colour of bronze, made such a conquest of certain Germanic ladies that, after their return to Jibuti, these ladies sent them letters and money-orders.

It created some amusement out there. The German consul got wind of this little scandal and reported it to his Government, which unofficially requested the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs to do what it could. The Governor of French Somaliland had this compromising correspondence stopped and destroyed.

Let us turn from this painful study of human weakness. Let us note that, quite apart from any such thing, an idealism worthy of all respect may attract women of almost superhuman chastity towards men of another race.

I trust that these women, for whom I have every admiration, will not be offended if I link them up with the subject of this book, which they would doubtless regard as extremely coarse, not to say superfluous.

But I am bound to pay attention to the impulse, perfectly pure as it unquestionably is, which urges so many British, American, German and French women, who frown on sexuality and certainly cannot be accused of it, towards India and its mysticism, in search of the satisfaction of strictly spiritual hopes.

I venture to touch here—and I make my excuses once more—on the very delicate subject of a feeling mainly religious, though partly political. It is inspired by the highest idealism; but it cannot wholly divorce itself from materialism, any more than any other human faculty. Accordingly, it has a link with the flesh—however slender that link may be.

I have already said that dissatisfaction, loneliness, boredom are the most common lot of White women, once their own resources or their husbands' efforts free them from the direct pursuit of money. ***They want happiness***: in other words, something that will satisfy them, body and soul. They want a god, a faith, a religion. Being daughters of democracy, to-day they look for this miracle even in the rubbish-heap of popular political slogans; but they fail to find it.

They also look for it abroad, in the lands still shrouded with something of a sense of mystery. What is the devotion of those European ladies who have enthusiastically adopted the cause, the regime, the evangelical life of Gandhi, if not a striking illustration of everything of which we have caught a glimpse in the racial chaos?

In a very fine form—perhaps an absurd one, but a heroic one—it represents ***one of the responses*** already voiced by White women to the call, still hesitant, of Coloured men.

V

On the other hand, among a very large number of White women, plebeian and aristocratic alike, you find an undeniable, an innate and not acquired, a physical horror of Yellow and Black men. Plenty of prostitutes even, who have to accept the caresses of Coloured men, make no secret of their aversion from them.

One night I happened to be all by myself in the Grand Hotel in Pekin. I was not yet feeling sleepy, so I opened my bedroom window and went out and leant over my balcony. The smell, the illumination, the hum of the immense Asiatic city surrounded me.

It was fresh, but not cold. The "yellow wind," the sandy wind, had died down. Outside the hotel, a few motor-cars with blazing headlights made their way along Chang-an Street. Opposite me, the dark wall of the Legation quarter stood out in the sky against the glittering background of the Chinese city. To my right I could make out a mass of horned buildings: the Imperial palaces.

All at once I heard a rustle of silk. On the same balcony, to my left, I saw a girl, with the light in her bedroom behind her shining on her, just as mine did on me.

"I beg your pardon," she said, in an agitated tone of voice, "but you're French, aren't you?"

My reverie about the restoration of the Emperor Pu-Yi promptly vanished. This Anglo-Saxon girl who was asking me whether I was French had a blaze of auburn hair around a face sprinkled with that golden dust which medicine politely calls "ephelides." The childish prettiness of her face contrasted with her athletic body, revealed by her kimono. She seemed quite an ordinary girl—and very much upset.

"May I come into your room for a moment?" she went on, without more ado.

I have made many odd acquaintances on my travels, but I have never regretted any of them. When this apparently shameless girl sat down in my bedroom opposite me, I realised that in fact she was very shy. Indeed, she was trembling.

"You're a gentleman, aren't you?" she stammered.

"Do me the honour to think so, madame."

"Mademoiselle, please."

"I beg your pardon."

"I was too scared to stay in my room alone."

"Scared? But what about?"

She hung her head, and crossed her hands over her bosom in an instinctive, virginal gesture of defence.

"Pekin isn't in a state of revolution now," I pointed out, "and the Grand Hotel is a model of correctitude. It's French, like myself. Here you're in France. . . ."

"That's just it!" she exclaimed. All at once she stared at me with suspicion, with dismay.

"Oh," she cried, "surely you're not a Coloured man? Let me have a look at your nails, your eyes. . . ."

I was taken aback; but I laughed and displayed for her benefit ten half-moons and two pupils above suspicion. She breathed again.

"Forgive me," she said, "but I've had such a fright."

By now I felt sorry for her, and anxious about her.

"What do you mean, mademoiselle? Has some Chinese insulted you?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of the Chinese!" she replied. Instinctively, she drew back her shoulder as though she were going to fight; and her little fists looked as though they would find their mark.

"Then who was it?"

She shuddered, and buried her face in her hands.

"***I saw a Negro***," she stammered.

"What, a Negro? Here in Pekin?"

"Right here in the hotel. Outside, in the corridor."

"Probably a clerk or a servant at one of the Legations."

"He may have been. I think he was wearing some kind of uniform."

"And did he insult you or annoy you in some way?"

"Oh, no, he just brushed past me. . . . And then he simply looked back—and he laughed. . . ."

"And what then?"

"Then I bumped into a radiator. . . . I leant up against the wall . . . I ran into my room."

"And that was all?"

Red-head nodded assent.

"So this dreadful Negro didn't try to follow you into your room?"

"Oh, no!"

She stared at me again, very seriously. She had quite recovered from her panic. She didn't look in the least crazy, and certainly not in the least vicious. I couldn't make head or tail of it.

"He's the first Negro," she explained, "that I've ever seen. The first as a living being—in real flesh and blood."

My amusement got the better of me.

"You really mean to say he was your first Negro? You've never seen one before?"

"No, never!"

The desperate way in which she said it finished off what was left of my gravity. This athletic English girl struck me as quite childish. I couldn't help laughing. That made her blush.

"Don't make fun of me!" she cried. "I'm an Australian. I was brought up in a big city where no Coloured man is allowed to live. Of course, during holidays in the country I've sometimes just caught sight of natives. But they're Polynesians, with straight hair—in fact, they've got hair all over them, and they look just like monkeys. In all the seven States of Australia, I don't suppose there's one ***real Negro***—an African Negro. Our laws don't let them in, you know—not even mulattoes."

“Yes, I know all about your barrier against Black immigration—and I know it’s quite justified, on many grounds,” I hastened to say, by way of winning her pardon for my hilarity.

“I’d seen Negroes in pictures, of course, in geography books—and also in comic parts in the films. But I’ve never seen a real one anywhere: ***it wasn’t possible***. . . .”

“So this is your first trip outside Australia?”

“I’m on a cruise covering Java, China and Japan; and the ship is making a call at Tientsin.”

“I see. Fifty tourists and one shepherd—I mean one cruise-manager. You all assembled this morning in the hotel lounge, eh? And you’ve been seeing all there is to see in Pekin in forty-eight hours. . . . And on top of this crowded programme you discover this Negro of yours. Such a find, in China, is certainly rather paradoxical. . . .”

“I chose this trip,” she remarked, goaded to desperation, “just because I thought I wouldn’t see anybody but Yellows. . . .”

“Oh,” said I, “and so you attach some importance to that? You don’t want ***even to meet*** Negroes? You don’t want to see them even where your Australian immigration laws don’t apply?”

She started trembling again.

“Yes, that’s it,” she admitted. “I’ve always been afraid of them— ever since I was a baby. . . .”

“And that’s not so very long ago. . . .So you were afraid of them without knowing them—and in the one continent where they’re not allowed to go! Then I suppose somebody told you horrible tales about them when you were a child?”

“My mother was born in South Africa. Her parents lived there.”

“Oh, I see! So it’s a hereditary antipathy?”

“I’ve always had a horror of those savages,” she exclaimed. “I felt sure I’d loathe them. . . .”

She stopped short.

“And,” I asked, as gently as I could, “what impression did the one you saw just now make on you?”

She covered her face with her hands again.

“Oh,” she moaned, “it’s terrible! I shall have nightmares, just as I used to do. I shan’t be able to sleep any more.”

“Do you generally sleep badly?”

“It all depends. I can sleep all right in Australia, if I swim a lot.”

“But. . . . Look here, I know by now that you’re a nice girl—and you’re a very charming one. Don’t you ever think about getting married?”

She took a hand away from one eye.

“In my country,” she explained, “there are at least three times as many women as men.”

“Oh yes, of course! And they used to call Australia ‘the land without women’! . . .”

I recalled the startling change in that continent, to which wives were dispatched by the shipload less than a century ago.

Against the swarms of rabbits in her fields Australia has managed to defend herself. But she remained indifferent while daughters were born to her in overwhelming surplus—as though by way of revenge on men. Nowadays this has led to the worst kind of unemployment among the feminine sex. Despite their complete religious tolerance, the Australians have not yet adopted the polygamy of the Mormons.

A land without men! Along that Australian coast with its Riviera climate; outside those cities, Sydney and Melbourne, with their luxuriantly flowery suburbs, I remembered the swimming-clubs whose membership runs into hundreds upon hundreds of pretty, healthy girls, condemned to celibacy and driven to seek an outlet in sport. All those swim-suits that cling so vainly, all those heads of hair tossed in the sunshine, all that rippling laughter—and all that hidden torment along the white Australian beaches! . . .

I remembered, too, how some of these girls got sick of it, ran away, and—to put it plainly—sold themselves in the brothels of Singapore and elsewhere in the East Indies. For that matter, there are not so very many of them; for the innate morality of the British-born saves most girls from such madness.

In any case, my next-door neighbour in the Grand Hotel was not that kind of girl. She struck me as not merely quite innocent, but even of naturally impeccable moral character. So I attributed her startling emotion, her exaggerated, morbid fear, to what Freudians call "repressed virginity."

I wanted to make sure.

"You'll forgive me," I said, "but you've seen plenty of other Coloured men—Brown men in Java, Yellow men in China—in the course of your cruise. Haven't any of them . . . upset you like this?"

Her reply was quite simple:

"They just disgusted me—or else they amused me, as though they were acting, or as though they were . . . animals."

"And the real Negro, the 'African,' as you call him?"

She turned pale. All at once, she was panic-stricken again.

"He's my nightmare! . . ."

I felt so sorry for her—she had to make such an effort to tell me all about it:

"If I've had that nightmare once, I've had it a hundred times. I used to have it when I was a child, and then at college. Lying safe in my own bed, with thousands upon thousands of my own race around me, I dream that horrible Black men come and capture me. I am to be their victim, I am to ***belong to them***. Nobody, nothing, can save me from them. I run away, and they catch me. I run away again, and I fall over a precipice. Then, I wake up, shivering. But they're not there any longer and oh, it's such a relief!"

I didn't dare to say a word. She stood up and stared at the door.

"What if that nightmare of mine is coming true? I feel sure that Negro is coming for me. How can I get away from him? . . . He's there!"

"No, he isn't!" I reassured her. I opened the door and looked out into the wide, well-lit corridor. There wasn't a soul—not even a Chinese "boy."

"Nobody there, you see," I said. "You needn't be afraid. Go back to your own room and go to sleep, child."

"I couldn't sleep . . ."

"Then come outside for a breath of air."

We were back on the balcony, with all the majesty of a Pekin night around us. We stood close together now; but I knew that the girl was really in distress and that she just wanted comforting.

"Your laws of race segregation were obviously necessary in the past," I said, "but I wonder whether nowadays they're not responsible for this . . . this persecution mania of yours. In France and in our Colonies, you know, Blacks can go where they like; but White women aren't afraid of them."

"Oh, of course," she cried, "Frenchwomen!"

Doubtless she was on the point of repeating the calumny which our enemies circulate: that our women are of easy virtue where Blacks are concerned.

"Frenchwomen," I told her, "are not unreasonably afraid of Negroes; but still less are they perversely curious about them. For them, there is no such thing as a Black obsession—any more than there is for American women or English women who are born with balanced minds and live ***normal*** lives. . . . Do you know what I wish for you, my dear?"

"What?"

"I wish that, in the course of this cruise of yours, you may meet a nice boy of your own race and marry him."

She started and stared at me.

"You mean you wish me a . . . a White husband?"

"Of course."

She nodded her flaming head in assent, smiled very shyly, and, with a delightful burst of candour, she murmured:

"Yes, I'd like that. I'd even accept a French husband—yes, ***even a Frenchman***—so long as he was quite White, a real White . . . like you, for instance. . . ."

After this kind of proposal, which I must confess I found very flattering, she shook hands with me warmly, by way of thanking me for my brotherly help in her deep distress. Then she ran away to her own room, now quite calm and comforted, and ready, I hope and believe, for a sound sleep like a child, with no nightmares.

VI

The most potent factor in amorous attraction or antipathy is probably the sense of smell. Animals can scent their friends or their enemies. What is the smell of a human being? It is an exhalation of the various substances which compose him. Perhaps the supreme secret of all our earthly agitation is a perpetual chemical combination, an association of acids and basic elements, among people, who themselves are aggregates of minerals, salts and other matter variously distributed.

In its simplest form, love may therefore be reduced to an analysis of the presence or the absence, in any given couple, of sulphates or fats, which condition the grain and degree of humidity of their skins, their digestive capacity and their liveliness of mind, the strength of their lungs and their good or bad humour. The race-problem, too, may similarly be regarded as primarily a function of organic chemistry and of the sense of smell.

In any case, it is unquestionable that White people, ***all White people*** in proportion to their degrees of Whiteness, exhale an odour, a scent, peculiar to themselves. So far as they themselves are concerned, this common odour is merged in their individual odours; but it is always perceptible around every one of them by Coloured people, who also have their own racial odour, different in the case of Yellows, Blacks, Browns and Reds respectively.

A Chinese crowd in Pekin smells quite differently from a Congolese crowd in Brazzaville or a Madagascan crowd in Tananarivo—and from a European or American crowd. Climate, diet and way of life may affect this phenomenon, with the result that a White who lives for a long time among the Chinese may approximate to their exhalation; but heredity, race itself, strike the essential note, which is indestructible.

Even after a long exile, a man continues to smell as he did in his own country. When I found myself at Billancourt in Paris among Yellows who had been settled in

France for years, I breathed the same acrid odour of slightly fishy leather which Shanghai or Hanoi had left in my memory.

Between male and female of different races, is any mutual attraction through the sense of smell possible? Even in one and the same race, men and women smell quite differently. It may be that a special kind of concordance, in some way transcending normal accord, exists between certain Coloured men and certain White women. But in general the odour of the male, which is part of his magnetism, his moral ascendancy (even when he is less civilised), is probably the paramount factor.

This kind of attraction, of course, cannot create that association of their whole personalities which is attained by long-married couples belonging to the same race, who have often been brought up from childhood on identical diets and with identical outlooks and opinions, and end by looking as alike as doubles and understanding one another without need of words. But physical imprint, at least, is effected in accordance with that marvellous ***mimicry*** which seems to be one of the most active of Nature's laws.

I witnessed such a metamorphosis in a French girl who for three years had been the mistress of a Chinese student. He had a terribly Asiatic visage, while she had originally an unquestionably Celtic face. She was very observant, very shrewd; and she had subconsciously taken to herself, and then exteriorised, a kind of caricature of her lover's looks and ways. In the end she resembled him so much that she looked like a racial sister of his.

She was pretty, and he was ugly. She had improved upon the reflection she made of him; but a reflection she was. She imitated him instinctively in the little grimaces she made. This was, I repeat, an improvement on his villainous Chinese physiognomy—other Chinese, for that matter, are very handsome in their own way—but, in any case, it was ***something*** of this man with whom she had intimately associated for years. If he had not stamped her with his seal, she was at least like wax awaiting the seal.

On the other hand, the landlord of a lodging-house at Issy-les-Moulineaux, a Chinese from Tientsin, in the north of China, married a Frenchwoman from Lille, tall, fair, bony and imperious. In this case, it was he who underwent the influence of his wife, born in a climate somewhat similar to his own. So far as his yellow skin and his black hair allowed him, he had modified himself to such an extent that he came to resemble his wife ***more than his own photographs***, taken while he was still in Asia, which adorned the lodging-house lobby.

What limits can be set upon the prodigious adaptability of body and soul? These, however, are but incidental results of ***lasting*** unions; and with the ***duration*** of unions sociology is not concerned. It is concerned with the ***results*** of unions, with births, with the possibility of a half-breed world. For such results momentary fascination suffices.

VII

I do not believe that Coloured men possess any secrets of voluptuousness, any more than I am able to believe, in the light of some knowledge of them, that any such secrets are possessed by women Black, Brown or Yellow.

In the first place, in regions where the man is much more honoured than the woman, and where custom forbids the woman to betray the least erotic emotion, it must naturally be the woman who is the greater adept in the art of love. If certain Oceanic peoples owed to their relaxing climate some charming or curious customs; if ancient Chinese and Japanese pictures constitute a complete catalogue of every con-

ceivable attitude, this does not imply that the art of love among the Coloured is superior, at least nowadays, to our own.

Certain age-old Coloured civilisations must obviously have been familiar with the whole cycle of sexual satisfaction, which, for that matter, is limited enough. But the West was equally familiar with it; and the West has gone on getting more and more civilised, whereas elsewhere a regular process of degeneration has tended to blot out everything.

If there ever were any esoteric secrets of love in the old-time Imperial harems or ***yoshivaras***, such things are all over, now that revolution has enabled the Asiatic mob to break in everywhere. If the East ever knew such secrets, it has forgotten them. Can you expect swarms of coolies who breed like animals to have anything to teach to up-to-date young ladies in bachelor-flats?

For that matter, certain tests have been applied. The great batch of Coloured men whom the war of 1914 introduced between Marseilles and the battlefields, and the phenomenon of "colonisation the wrong way round" which has since taken place, have given thousands of White women, mercenary by profession, more opportunities than they want of estimating the amorous accomplishments of Yellow men and Black men.

These women's conclusions are quite definite. They have found these new clients of theirs at least as violent, hurried and selfish as are most White men.

One is entitled to assert that, if the majority of White men themselves are still in the Middle Ages in the sphere of sexual relations, Orientals are either no more advanced, or else a hundred times less advanced and still utterly uncivilised.

If you would judge the intimate life of India, for example, study Mrs. Catherine Mayo's heartrending record of the Calvary of the poor little girls lawfully wedded to high-caste Hindus, who, a few days later, send them to hospital crippled, mutilated, gangrenous—unless peritonitis, treated with applications of the dung of sacred cows, has already brought these loveless marriages to an early end.

I must say that it makes me smile when, in cafés in French provincial towns, I hear whispered second-hand stories about the Chinese Don Juan with his bristling nerves and his magnetic hands, or the Negro Don Juan with his illimitable vigour.

That there are, in all races, a minority of adepts in the art of love I do not doubt. But White men, who have remained until our own time masters of the world of diplomacy and the world of mechanics, White men who are capable of presiding over an assembly of native chiefs and driving racing cars—such men certainly ***can*** rival their Coloured competitors in coolness and tactfulness in the sphere of that other thrilling achievement of mastery: love. It is up to them to learn how to do it and take the trouble to do it.

VIII

White women, as we have seen, are capable of the most varied feelings towards Coloured men, ranging from morbid horror of them to enthusiasm for them and mystical illusion about them. Yellow and Black men have an equally diverse range of feelings about White women. You find some of them humble and servile, others insolent and contemptuous. It all depends on the circumstances of their meeting, the social status of the man, that of the woman, and the way in which she handles their relations.

Some Russian girls along the "Road to Shanghai" allow themselves to be treated as outcasts. Others are naturally regal. For that matter, you find much the same thing among ourselves.

I may quote the case of the head chef at a Chinese restaurant in Paris. This Asiatic was married to a Frenchwoman, and he beat her, cloistered her and insulted her with a hatred transcending that of the male for the female. Here there was an element of racial aversion.

Such ***contempt for the White woman***, curiously linked with ***admiration of her and desire for her***, seems to be fundamental among Coloured men, especially the Yellows. You find a number of indications of it in the modern history of the relations between China and Europeans: a history seldom creditable to our diplomats.

Throughout humanity there prevails a quite common desire to flout, to make game of anything that is felt to be superior. The strength of this sadist tendency finds further striking testimony in the confidences of the prostitutes, or semi-professional girls, in the Latin Quarter of Paris who specialise in relations with Yellow men.

Many of these girls reveal the propensity of their clients towards forms of sexual relations which are humiliating or cruel to the woman. These Coloured men pay her price for the sake of seeing her humbled. A White slave, reduced to bestiality, is obviously a treat to these men, only now able to be masters, who have been brought up in detestation of Western colonisers.

They look back, not without good reason, on the sack of Pekin in 1900 and other acts of violence committed in their country by us (usually, it is true, by way of reprisals); and now, in their turn, they are "colonising."

Here we come back to the central enigma. When this Chinese, or even this Negro, is able in a Paris bedroom to witness the undressing of a White goddess, whom he would once not even have dared to look at, in Asia or Africa, for fear of getting a good hiding on the spot—is he really excited, is he really delighted?

Has he not got to jump a gulf so wide that the only feeling left in him is one of stupor? When he goes away again, after receiving this foreign woman's kisses—and kissing, throughout the Orient, is regarded as a dirty action—doubtless he does not experience that animal depression of the Latin saying. He is proud of himself. But, apart from that, is his mind conscious of any sense of enjoyment? And beforehand, was it a real sex-appeal, a physical attraction, which urged him to make this conquest? Or was he simply acting in obedience to a snobbish racial feeling?

These questions remain unanswerable. The Coloured men are not going to tell us the answers. The natural consequence of their present false position, in between a past which they are forswearing and all the ***novus ordo*** which they are borrowing from us, is that their innate reserve is strengthened by deliberate deceit, deliberate dissimulation.

They judge themselves to be weak in relation to us for the time being, and so they smile and take refuge behind our own verbiage, which serves them to lull us to sleep and make fools of us.

Such is their common course of action where the White woman is concerned. They flatter her, they cajole her as affectedly as any Lovelace or Valmont in our classics. When they have her at their mercy, if they can they maltreat her or even kill her, because fundamentally they hate her, just as the beggar hates the princess. If they are afraid of the consequences, they confine themselves to humiliating her, making use in their defence of all the sophistries, all the crooked lawyers' dodges which our literature has taught them ever since Jean Jacques Rousseau.

That Genevese author, let me repeat, is one of the authors most studied in the Far East, together with Karl Marx.

The Yellows, and little by little the Blacks who used to be so simple-minded, interpret our repertory—our declarations of the rights of man, our invocations of divine

law—as an admirable set of formulas for justifying any wrong-doing. They make use of this repertory when they break their contracts with White nations. They also make use of it in their sexual life with women of the race of which they are jealous.

Partly desire to be in the fashion; partly guile mingled with scorn—here perhaps we have the secret of their present attitude: that of smirking lovers learning their job. But, within a few generations, habit will doubtless create among them a real desire for White women, a pleasure in the possession of White women which is not illusory. Be that as it may, at this very moment ***they want White women***.

Already, in our own ancestral domain, in our old countries which used to be ever on guard against invasion, we find these covetous, prolific males establishing themselves, taking women, and colonising exactly as the Whites did during the centuries of unilateral expansion from Christopher Columbus to Gallieni and Kitchener.

In all our great cities we discover hives of Coloured immigrants, from which swarms of them scatter amid provincial towns and through the countryside. In Europe and America alike, Black quarters, Yellow quarters have become by no means ghettoes where despised outcasts are suffered to live, but centres of night-life, of pleasures sung by the greatest of modern White poets, where White women get their own menfolk to take them as though to sanctuaries of costly bliss.

If these Coloured immigrants emerge from their own quarters and go and explore the White quarters, they find there, in a hundred and one details, evidence of their influence, their authority as conquerors. For example, during the bathing season the windows of our most up-to-date shops display feminine wax-dolls in swim-suits or beach-pyjamas, with their faces, their arms and their legs dyed a deep ochre. ***That is the ideal of a fashion which is preparing the minds of White women to accept the idea of cross-breeding***.

Just like the Whites in their Eastern colonies, the Yellows and the Blacks come and colonise among us. As a rule, their stay is only temporary. But, if they return after a few years to their native land, they have not omitted to leave the seeds of their race behind them.

They leave us children whom they have engendered with White women, and whom they doubtless despise for their mixture of blood—just as, fundamentally, they despise their mothers.

CHAPTER XIV

COLONISATION THE WRONG WAY ROUND

I

THERE is nothing very surprising in the fact that Japanese and even Chinese should have sown the Hawaiian islands and the Californian coast with their little shops, just like fair-booths, and that in Honolulu, in San Francisco and in Los Angeles you should often see their kimonos, their blue cotton robes, their Yellow faces.

All these places are direct points of call on the sea-route which starts from Asia.

But New York is much farther away from Asia. Your impression of surprise is a good deal deeper when you leave the Jewish and Italian streets in the neighbourhood of the old Tombs Prison, and reach Canal Street and Elizabeth Street on the way to the monumental bridge which leads to the Bowery and Brooklyn.

Here you are once more in a Chinese city, with its signs in mandarin characters, its chop-suey restaurants, its lemon-coloured children playing all over the street, and even its pagoda and its mysterious lanterns.

What is this Asiatic community doing here, so far away from the Celestial Empire?

Again, I can understand the influx of Chinese and Japanese into Marseilles, and also that of the groups of Madagascans settled behind the port. They can get there easily enough as steerage passengers in French liners; they are beside a sunny sea, just as though they were in Hong Kong; and they are in a cosmopolitan city.

But what are they doing in Paris, in London and above all in Berlin, in the heart of the European continent, separated from the Mongol frontier by a dozen other frontiers and all the heart-breaking length of the trans-Siberian railway?

What are they doing so far away from home, despite all the obstacles in their path? Apart from material necessity—which they could satisfy nearer home—what nomad instinct, what longing for new lands, what exotic desire, ***what Eros*** thus started them on their way and carried them all over the world?

There was, of course, the Great War, that immense explosion whose eddies uprooted plenty of people among its survivors. But the war, with all its intensive munition-making, its world-wide recruiting of soldiers and workmen, the war, at once so destructive and so creative, committed suicide eighteen years ago.

Then there was the post-war period, the "boom," which meant more windfalls, more jobs for coolies broken to turning their hands to anything. But that exhilarating joy-balloon burst for lack of any more oxygen; and now we have the "depression."

The Chinese in Europe keep on saying they are going home. But, in fact, they are still in our midst—droves of them.

II

I pass in front of the Gare de Lyon in Paris, and keep round to the left of the station. I follow a narrow street. All at once, I have left my White, if not entirely French, Paris behind me. I am in a city half-Chinese, half-African, a labyrinth of twisting, smelly streets, given up to Yellow men and swarthy men.

The Kabyles, Moroccans and Algerian Jews keep to themselves. The two principal alleys, which meet in a horse-shoe, the Passage Brunoy and the Passage Ragueneau, are ***pure China***.

In the first are lodging-houses, the local ***caravanserais***. In the second are wholesalers' shops. For this is merely a metropolis, a central rallying-point, whither a multitude of Chinese pedlars come to restock from time to time. These small tradesmen have descended like a swarm of locusts upon the countryside of ***every province in France***. You find them in even the most out-of-the-way market-towns in Brittany and Picardy.

The French peasants, who used to be so distrustful, were made accustomed by the war to the sight of foreigners. They are no longer afraid of the Asiatic, slim and gentle as a girl, who offers them out of his pack chinaware, Oriental rugs, table-linen and bed-linen. His prices are in themselves very reasonable—and, of course, they beat him down a bit.

These Yellow pedlars sell at a very small profit, but they live so economically that they manage to make money and save money. Any number of them send regular deposits to their Chinese bank, the Wenchow Shanghai Box, and finally re-export themselves, taking a score of thousand francs with them.

It is the wholesalers for their benefit, also Chinese, who have settled in the shops in the Passage Ragueneau. Behind their dusty shop-windows, daubed with red ideograms, amid crates arrived straight from Shantung and Shekiang, they recreate the business atmosphere of new Canton or modern Pekin.

If you go in and talk business with one of these merchants in long black coats, his amiability is a lesson to certain of his French competitors; and, when he hears that you know China, he will at once offer you tea in a lidded cup, made Chinese fashion.

But his normal customers are other Chinese, who reappear in relays, in a perpetual coming and going, every three months. They take rooms in the Passage Brunoy, stay there a week or ten days, and then entrain again with bags and bundles full of brand-new stock, which they peddle during the next three months.

I have interviewed landlords of the lodging-houses where they stay. These landlords are ***still*** Whites; but, undoubtedly, their place will soon be taken by Chinese landlords, as has happened at Billancourt.

Though a little taken aback at first by their lodgers, these Frenchmen have got used to them, and find them good payers and quiet tenants. They look upon them half as animals, and half as a superior species of Lascars, completely de-loused. They have persuaded them not to spit all over the place (which is a habit in China); and they allow them to cook their own rice in the kitchen.

One of them told me the words of Chinese he had learned for essential conversational purposes: "They call a key, ***sousse***. For week, they say ***kaliba***. . . ."

These landlords scrutinise the green cards issued by the police, on which the sign "c/c," followed by a numeral, means that the man concerned has been in jail.

When a Chinese in Paris wants to send a letter to a colleague still in the provinces, he traces the name on an envelope in spidery characters. For the benefit of the postal service, the lodging-house keeper proceeds, in his sprawling Parisian handwriting, to add an address in this style: "Monsieur Chinois, Bar Saint-Sauveur, rue du Cotentin, Bayeux." The itineraries of these wanderers can be followed from the calendar of markets.

They live quietly in their rooms, seasoning pork and cabbage to their taste, and playing mah-jong. They are not allowed to have any women visitors. Among them there are hardly any Chinese women, with the exception of a few old women with de-

formed feet, who go and juggle outside cafés. But all the brothels in the Saint Paul and Bastille districts are full of these Chinese pedlars, whose industriousness is equalled by their sensuality.

The White women who sell their wretched bodies in these brothels think nothing of entertaining Yellow men. Their other clients consist of Africans or else Jews, scarcely less Coloured, from the Hotel-de-Ville ghetto. The only men of their own race with whom they are concerned are their bullies. Indeed, I have heard of two cases in which these bullies were Japanese.

Still in the Passage Brunoy, I find the café-restaurant run by Wang-Hu-Leang, an ever-smiling and highly educated Chinese. He speaks French perfectly, and on occasion the police make use of his services as an interpreter.

His establishment feeds a number of Yellows and serves them as a club. It is a favourite resort of Chinese married to White women or with White mistresses. For the landlord himself married a Frenchwoman, an energetic woman who carries at least half the business on her shoulders.

She keeps an eye on the Shanghai chef, clears away the bowls out of which the customers eat with chop-sticks, makes out their bills, and listens—even if she cannot understand them—to the mysterious conversations carried on in excited whispers by adherents of the Kuomintang.

Despite this European feminine element, you feel that you are in Asia in this low room, in which little is to be heard but the soft click of dominoes. Outside it play children half-French, half-Chinese, chubby-cheeked as little Buddhas.

III

Now let us cross the Seine to the Boulevard Saint-Michel. From the Rue Soufflot to the Odéon, we find ourselves in one of the centres of attraction of the numerous Asiatic students in Paris. Another contingent of them are quartered farther south, around the Cité Universitaire in the Pare Montsouris.

Here we have immigrants of a higher class than those in the Passage Brunoy, and much more interesting. These young men come into our midst in search of French culture, which may perhaps give them a taste for our literary and scientific tradition.

But they also study the White woman, the Parisienne, with as much assiduity as their exiles' resources and the caprices of our modern Musettes will let them.

Up to a few years ago, they were well-off, being in receipt of handsome allowances from their fathers, who were often mandarins or ***tukyuns***. They spent money freely, made amorous conquests, and so aroused the jealousy of the White students.

There were a few brawls. Novelists studied the state of mind of the White girl who lived with a Yellow lover. There was also a large number of births of illegitimate half-breed children, duly registered at the town-halls of the Sixth and Fourteenth districts—which are not unfamiliar with illegitimate births.

To-day, the number of Coloured students has diminished, and their allowances are less lavish. But they still provide good customers for the restaurants in the Rue Cujas, the Rue de la Sorbonne, and the Rue des Carmes. Here, in fact, you can dine cheaply on a Chinese menu, which is one of the healthiest and tastiest in the world.

In one of the most modest of these establishments, I renewed my acquaintance with white rice, excellently cooked, and red tea. Around me Yellow young men in European clothes sat at table, with serious, intellectual faces. Almost all of them were accompanied by little lady friends, blondes or brunettes.

Among these girls I saw some who were really pretty and well-dressed. They looked rather embarrassed at the sight of me, and avoided catching my eye. It was obvious that the motive of their affairs was mainly mercenary.

Others were ordinary girls of no great attraction, who were, I suppose, glad to have found men who appreciated them. These girls, despite their smaller degree of charm, struck me as being the more independent. They nudged their placid Chinese companions, and made them go and ask for things which were not on the menu. They handled their chop-sticks awkwardly, and dawdled over their dishes. Other girls again had come there on their own and were dining by themselves. They talked loudly and familiarly to the waiters with their eternal smiles, and eyed the Yellow men who happened to be alone, as though they were on the look-out for lovers.

A little later, I might have seen all these couples revolving at a dance-hall in the Rue Pascal. Its proprietor is a Chinese, and he runs two similar dance-halls in London. He also has two in Berlin.

But now let us go right across the great city of Paris to its western suburbs: Billancourt and Yssy.

Here we have a colony of Chinese workmen. The motor-car factories used to employ any number of them. As I write, many of them are out of work. Meanwhile, the jobless men are housed and fed by a very fine system of co-operative societies, which get occasional subsidies from the Chinese Legation and more regular assistance from the Asiatic grocers whose shops are scattered about the district.

Off the Rue Traversière you find lanes, enlivened by sickly shrubs, where this Yellow colony lives cheek by jowl with Polish and Czechoslovak colonies. You see signs in French lettering, in Russian lettering, and in Chinese characters: a trinity of alphabets. The Chinese are anything from shoemakers to barbers. They can turn their hands to any trade.

A long shed serves as canteen for two score of them. On the walls are stuck pictures of horned and clawed gods and demons, in fine red robes, such as you see everywhere in China at New Year. Dotted among the customers are ***a whole group of European women***: their wives. These women are factory-hands, and they met their Chinese husbands at work. Every one of them has at least one child with her, or is pregnant. They talk “pidgin” and teach their husbands French slang. You feel that they have adapted themselves to this peculiar environment. They lord it over it; but it surrounds them with Asia and Asia has surely set its mark upon them.

A tumbledown little villa serves as refuge for some sixty other Chinese, in this case completely down and out. They live on charity, and do it very philosophically. They are gentle, smiling, patient; and again they have White wives—in this case, embittered, peevish wives. Again there are chubby half-breed children, cheerful in their destitution like all Chinese brats.

The adults have organised themselves into a kind of Soviet. The comrade-president is a colossus with an oval, clean-shaven head: a hard-boiled, laconic fellow from Kiangsu. He is seconded by a Yunnanese dwarf with keen eyes and flowing black hair, who talks sixty to the dozen, being endowed with the Oriental gift of the gab. Some of these Asiatic immigrants whom I see here have been in France ever since 1916. When I ask them about their plans, they tell me that they are going back to Asia “next month.” But I know I shall still find them in Paris a year hence.

In Billancourt are also to be found a number of Yellows less unfortunate. Their unquestionable virtues of industry, honesty and politeness have enabled them to prosper in the grocery trade and the toy trade.

They, too, of course, are married to White wives; and they make good fathers. They send their children, in the first place, to a kindergarten "for Chinese" which is to be found at Yssy-les-Moulineaux, on the banks of the Seine, and has ***over fifty pupils***. Then they send them to the French primary council school. At this point, however, the children assemble every Thursday for a supplementary class ***with a Chinese teacher***, who grounds them in the language of their Asiatic ancestors.

In this suburb of Paris I have also interviewed Chinese hotel-keepers who cater for their fellow-countrymen. They, again, have French wives who help them. I have read the register of fresh arrivals: "Cheng-Song-Min, native of Ning-Hu-Fu . . ." And I have heard the White landlady, with all the landlady's superiority, scold her Yellow husband: "Li-Pei, will you shut that door!" I have heard her talk contemptuously about "women who go with Chinamen," those irregulars who sell or surrender themselves, but who haven't brains enough or nerve enough to get themselves married!

In the phenomenon of peaceful penetration, some of whose incidents I have just sketched, this feminine question, this sexual question, possesses a peculiar importance. In fact, the Yellow penetration among the Whites ***could not assume a graver form***.

Almost everywhere they work, the Chinese, by their wonderful economy and industry, take possession of trade and of landed property. In the French Concession at Shanghai, in Hong Kong, in French Indo-China, even in British India and Madagascar, which their advance-guard has now reached, any number of buildings, business firms and commercial undertakings of all kinds belong to them, thanks to the game of banking and money-lending at which they excel, as they do at all games.

Even in Europe, even in America, despite laws supposed to restrict ownership to citizens, Chinese capital is already at work carving out fiefs for Asia. It is true that as yet this capital is very small, by comparison with White financial power; and, at the worst, legislative action could annul privileges which were being abused. ***But no legislative action can get rid of half-breed children***.

IV

Ever since the time of Jules Ferry, French policy, dominated by a socialistic ideal which is highly admirable and certainly dangerous, plainly and simply ignores the fact that men and women are born differently Coloured.

No official document in France ever mentions ***the Colour*** of the people concerned. The result is that, without endless unofficial investigation, you cannot find out in what proportion France is now populated by Blacks and Yellows, or at what rate the White race in France is undergoing a process of admixture.

With reckoning thus restricted, I shall certainly be on the safe side if I estimate Chinese immigrants in the whole of France at ten times the Paris contingent, or, say, thirty thousand.

There are the pedlars who are supplied by the wholesalers in the Passage Rague-neau. There are large groups in Marseilles and in Lyons. This latter group has been assisted to settle there by a venerable Chinese man of letters, Li-Yun-Lin, a philanthropist like our men of 1848. I met him in Pekin, at a dinner-party given by that hospitable young Marshal, Chang-Hsiao-Liang.

"Every one of us can follow one of two paths," this classical sage said to me. "We ought to choose the path of gentleness, not the path of violence. I am writing a book to convince humanity of this."

At the time, it did not occur to me to ask him what he thought about love-affairs between Yellow men and White women. But his precept clearly applies to that subject very well.

As for the Blacks, their number in France unquestionably exceeds the number of Asiatics. It is not for nothing that we govern immense areas in Africa. Here we have colonisation the other way round.

In Paris, especially since the Colonial Exhibition, you cannot go for an hour's stroll without meeting several of our worthy dark-skinned fellow-citizens. Let me remark that, from any other than the sexual point of view, their presence in Paris rejoices me. I have too much admiration for France's fine imperial, ***and not imperialist***, achievement outside Europe, and I have also too much respect for human liberty, to despise any of the races ***politically*** allied with my own, or, for that matter, any Coloured people whatever.

Apart from the French colonial sphere, it was with extreme pleasure that I travelled peacefully over China and Japan, and I pay tribute to the very hospitable welcome given me in these two great countries, one of which has still partly preserved its valuable possession of picturesque originality, while the other is in course of modernising itself by the miracle of energy which all Westerners must admire.

The Blacks, I repeat, are very numerous in France; and, as I have already said, they exercise upon some White women, not too well balanced, an attraction which is semi-fictitious, but suffices to explain many a case of recklessness.

Our society, which is so proud of its organisation, is in this respect in the same position as it is with regard to everything that has to do with sexual instruction. It has no real defence. It trusts to chance, out of false modesty and sheer fatuity.

Everywhere in Paris that is specially frequented by Black men, you see them accompanied by White women, and often pestered and pursued by White women. In such places, I have overheard conversations, lovers' quarrels, feminine tragedies too lamentable to laugh at, despite the element of buffoonery introduced by the Negro.

I have seen bullies in caps and scarves, as Black as possible, but fine fellows—***nigri sed formosi***—and first-rate boxers, keeping an eye on the "work" of their White slaves, and playing ***belote*** with them during intervals of relaxation.

This lowest degree of physical subjection, a White woman prostituting herself for the benefit of a Black man, may strike Parisian pseudo-dilettantes as comic; but it will arouse indignation and alarm, with good reason, in anybody who has travelled and realises the existence of the race-war.

Of course, here I am quoting an exceptional case. But it is more than enough to be able to quote one such case, when it is tolerated not so much by the police, who are powerless to interfere, or by the victim, who is more or less a consenting party, as by public opinion.

French public opinion is still asleep. It is fatuously blind to facts. It has no idea of the peril which, among all the White nations, threatens France quite particularly, because France is a great empire mixed up with Coloured subjects, and because Paris is the "Capital of Desire" for the whole world.

When some Americans in Paris, fired by too much French liquor, wanted to throw some other customers, who happened to be Negroes, out of a night-resort where they were deigning to revel, the Paris newspapers protested with a chivalrous warmth which went too far, just as our guests were going too far.

These Americans were over-doing racial prejudice. As for us, we were making too little of racial difference. ***The happy mean remains to be found***.

It is to help in finding it that I write this book, in which I call my own country to account along with all other countries. I write it with every desire to be helpful and not offensive, with all due respect for every kind of right which human beings possess, but also with a deep sense of their mutual obligations.

V

If you happen to take a fancy for debauchery anywhere in the world, in the depths of a canyon of skyscrapers or right out in the wilderness, you have only to shout at random, at the top of your voice:

"Paris, Moulin-Rouge, French Cancan, Pigalle, Montparnasse, ***Paris***, PARIS!"

On the spot, a gangster, a cowboy, a feathered Redskin, an obliging gorilla or boa-constrictor will emerge from the nearest saloon or undergrowth, repeat in his human or animal speech the magic word "Paris!" and lead you straight to the local prostitutes.

Such is the lowest, but the most general echo of the renown of Paris. I think they must have heard it in the moon.

The same thing is put one degree less vilely when people say to the French traveller:

"Ah, the only place in the world where you can have a good time is Paris!"

Precisely because he is a Parisian, the traveller has just been taken the rounds of all the dance-halls, cabarets and brothels in the place—and nowadays you find them, and very luxurious and spicy ones, too, even in the Hoggar Desert or in Mongolia. Modestly, he replies:

"Come, come, you don't need us for that any more. You've learned, my dear hosts! You know just how to do it yourselves."

But all over the world they protest. With one accord they shout you down:

"No, no, Paris is the one place! Paris is the Mecca of desire!"

It is not Coloured barbarians who are the first to revere Paris in this capacity; it is ***Whites***, Europeans, such as our neighbours the Germans. There is no counting those stricken with boredom, through incapacity to laugh without being tickled, who languish for nine months out of twelve, or two years out of three, in impatience for their next miraculous cure in Paris. There, and there only, they can refresh themselves at the fountain of youth.

Though they may not realise it, they do not merely steep themselves in vice there. They also come into contact with all the civilising ideals of the finest city in the world. They arrive congested and provincial. They go away relieved, to be sure, but also polished. In the long run, some of them do realise this.

For many people, the depression has meant postponement of these periods of regeneration; and this has made them feel all that they owe to us, all that they lose without us. A Brazilian friend of mine—he is really too kind to Paris, for he himself is an unquestionable aristocrat—recently wrote to me humorously:

"As the drop in my income has prevented me for the past two years from going to Paris to rewhiten myself, I feel that I am turning into a nigger; and everybody here feels the same."

Whiten himself in Paris: it is a pleasing formula, which is true to the letter in the dreams of thousands who are really Coloured. For all these thousands, Blacks and Yellows, in the depths of their backwoods overseas, believe in Paris just as other unfortunates believe in Lourdes. They imagine that if they could only reach that legendary, voluptuous city, a miracle would transmute them into the race they envy; and

they conceive of this miracle as taking the form of their sexual union with White women, very desirable and very wise, and infernally perverse, in the ways of love.

Such is the bad reputation of Paris. But if an Asiatic, having discovered the White world by way of San Francisco, let us suppose, goes farther on his travels, crosses the United States and the Atlantic, and finally reaches Le Havre, the mere charm of the rose-red cliffs of Saint-Adresse which he sights at the entrance to the port will warn him that this infamous legend is not true.

All at once, he will realise that he is entering a country where affection, tenderness, pure love prevail immeasurably over lubricity.

How could it be otherwise in France in general and Paris in particular? Among settled peoples, past influence and present atmosphere, history and climate, condition individuals. Any little study of the streets of Paris and Parisiennes in them will demonstrate this very readily.

Whenever I come home from abroad, as I walk about Paris I always have the impression that I know these streets and these women better, though I have been familiar with them ever since I was a child.

Once more I see the ***grands boulevards*** and the boulevards which are still called "outer"; the Champs-Élysées; the quays; the splendid panorama of the City from the now venerable Eiffel Tower to that jewel, the Louvre; the Cité and the Isle Saint-Louis; the Latin Quarter and those cross-roads in Montmartre, which should be studied both at midday and at midnight, amid the torrent of the industrious released from their offices for luncheon, and amid the tide of the frivolous plunging into ***moulins***, ***abbayes*** and ***isbas***. I stare at pretty girls if I like without being afraid, as I should be in America, of their being annoyed. They are not on the look-out for homage, but they do not resent it either; for they live in a nation long civilised, and they can trust the general mellowness of its manners.

I should like all Coloured men, and even non-French White men, who are guests in our multiform city, to comprehend all that this implies, and take a gentle, but lasting lesson from it. What they really need, of course, is that qualified Parisians should take the trouble to act as their guides, set them right where their judgment is wrong, and on occasion console them if they feel disappointed.

Then our guests would realise better that they are in an absolutely peerless centre of the world. They are refreshing themselves in the home not only of gaiety and pleasure, but also of wit, of irony, of tolerance, of good will, of balance in the sphere of reason, intuition, emotion and everything else. They are warming themselves at a hearth still ablaze since the days of Rabelais, Molière, Voltaire, the encyclopaedists and the romanticists. Then they would be convinced that if one capital in the world is thrown open to them up to the last limit of altruism, of readiness to share all things with them, that capital is Paris.

It is a capital where people go out of their way to find an explanation for anything, to take everything with the utmost good humour—where they smile even at rape, instead of lynching first and inquiring afterwards.

It is a city where, if the most odious outrage on the part of a Black man or a Yellow man against a White woman were proved, some spontaneous advocate for him would get up and plead extenuating circumstances, suggest that it was all a misunderstanding, and appeal for clemency.

"Before you punish this man," he would say, "think of the loneliness in which he has lived, this human being ***like ourselves***, subject to our own ills, which should make him worthy of our respect. Would you look down upon him, would you condemn him

to exile or death, if he had succeeded in winning the love of one of our women, had children by her, lived quietly as 'her man,' and gave her the normal happiness of married life? Can you not imagine what mistakes you yourselves might make, if you found yourselves in a different continent, lost amid a multitude who paid no attention to you? If these foreigners were on the point of falling upon and tearing you limb from limb, without making any attempt to understand your point of view, would you not, with every instinct for justice you possess, call upon some arbiter to stand between you and them, and proclaim, as I proclaim to-day: 'Stand back! He did not mean to do us any harm. It is our fault too. Let us forgive him. . . .' "

Such is Paris; such is France. Everybody knows it, all over the world. But sometimes people forget it, or ***choose*** to ignore it.

VI

Now that I have paid this well-deserved tribute to the genius of my country, and in particular to that of my beloved native city, Paris, the whole world's "capital of desire," I am, on the other hand, free to state my views about what I believe to be wrong, to be disastrous, in our attitude towards Coloured races.

Tolerance, the spirit of liberty, the spirit of fraternity—these are wonderful virtues; but only on condition that reason always keeps an eye on them. Our ***laisser-faire*** attitude is, little by little, leading France into a situation which is already shocking, already painful, to anybody who takes the trouble to look ahead. To-morrow it will be so serious that everybody will suffer for it and at last get excited about it; but then it will be too late.

It is disturbing to know that, at the end of their period of service, the thirty-five thousand Coloured soldiers whom we scatter among our garrison towns in France go back to their villages in the backwoods of Nigeria or Annam; and that there, in the presence of their younger brethren who will soon follow in their footsteps, they boast about having possessed White women, having had children by them, having received presents and money from them in return for their virile favours.

It is disturbing, in our music-halls where the tendency of the shows on the stage is definitely erotic, and where the ***promenoirs*** are thronged with aggressive prostitutes, to see wealthy Yellow men and Black men eyeing the exhibition of naked dancers with avidity, and then making their choice among these girls for hire and going home with them.

Nudity does not shock me in the least, so long as it is artistic; nor, indeed, does prostitution. For we have not yet arrived at a ***law of love*** which satisfies everybody; and, if a man cannot win love, it is all to the good that he should be able to buy at least an illusion of sexual satisfaction. But, precisely because my race possesses ***no*** sexual doctrine, I am frightened by the taste which these Coloured men are acquiring for White women.

Nowadays it is no longer provincial White men who keep up the takings in the ***promenoirs*** I have mentioned. It is, much more, Africans and Asiatics, who come to Paris from what we may call the modern "provinces" of Europe.

I repeat that in America, too, in the United States, in the "Burlesks" in San Francisco and Chicago, I have seen audiences ***mostly Negro*** gaping at the lascivious undressing of a blonde beauty. Even in the United States, the "excitation factory " functions ***for everybody***. Wherever I find anything to condemn from the point of view with which I am here concerned, I condemn it from the same sense of duty, whether it is in my own country or abroad.

To-day I ought to add, in the first place, that I have recently discussed such establishments with the directors and doctors of the department of the Prefecture of Police in Paris which supervises prostitution. They informed me that Coloured men employed as manual labourers in our European countries experience an irresistible curiosity about the White woman. Unfortunately, it is only too certain that these men can find a means of satisfying this curiosity by picking up clandestine street-prostitutes, whom no great city in the world has really managed to eliminate. These street prostitutes are all diseased, and they inevitably contaminate the clients whom they attract. In order to protect the health of workers belonging to Coloured races, who are essential to the industry of Paris, the administration is therefore more or less obliged to tolerate the existence of such establishments, where at least hygienic requirements can be supervised and very largely enforced. Such is the thesis of the specialists. I put it before my readers without discussing it here.

But the fact remains that we are being ***colonised by our Colonials***, by Coloured men. It is colonisation the wrong way round. It is still unobtrusive; but there is no mistaking it. For us the situation is now more or less what it was for the Chinese or the Annamites a hundred years ago.

At that time, a scholar, carried in his chair through the streets of Pekin or Hué, might absorb himself in the subtleties of disputes at the imperial court, in purely Asiatic controversies. He might think himself entitled to despise distant Europe, and laugh at its advance-guards whose penetration into Asia was still being easily repulsed.

But, since then, Europe has shown what her ambitions were. Moreover, she has taught a lesson to age-old, fathomless Asia, and even to young, hot-blooded Africa. Who knows what revenges they may have in store for us?

This colonisation the wrong way round may not be effected, like our colonisation, by military strength. But sex is an agency no less formidable. It may not be bayonets which our invaders present to us; but that does not make them any the less to be feared.

Let those scoff who will; but let those more thoughtful meditate. This ***colonisation in a sexual form*** which threatens the White countries is for all of us an urgent problem, a problem of life or death.

CHAPTER XV

A HALF-BREED WORLD?

I

ONE day at Hanoi, I was lunching with the Governor-General M. Pierre Pasquier, one of the great colonial administrators of our time, who since then has unhappily been killed in an airplane accident. His administration was strict but sensible, and he conveyed to me a high idea of the civilising mission of the White race.

Among the guests was an old friend of his, a colonist long settled in Haiphong, who had just returned from a trip to France. While he was in Paris, this colonist had heard about the Chinese and Annamites who had established themselves in Billancourt; and he went to have a look at them.

This was before the depression, and Yellow men working as factory-hands were much more numerous than they are as I write. They were making plenty of money; and, apart from the White wives whom many of them had married and by whom they had already produced any number of half-breed children, they had attracted some prostitutes more or less attractive, the flotsam of Grenelle and the Barbès, all with plenty to say for themselves.

The colonist found himself in the midst of this witches' Sabbath of all Colours one night which he assumed must have been that of payday. He had lived for thirty years in a region where their security demanded that Whites should make themselves respected, and where no Coloured man would dare to parade a love affair with a White woman. He was as much taken aback as a religious man would be if he found his faith profaned.

He was beside himself—as he was once more as he told us all about it. Right in the middle of the Rue Traversière, he waved his umbrella like a sword, and launched anathema against the Yellow monkeys who aspired so high as to debauch European women, and the trulls who sank so low as to surrender themselves to such coolies. He was justified in making a scene, and its occasion was melancholy enough; but it must have had an element of comedy.

It nearly turned into tragedy, though; for drunks, male and female, prostitutes as shameless as their Asiatic lovers, with a few Kabyles and Congolese into the bargain, collected bricks and scrap-iron from a handy builder's yard and started stoning this Jeremiah who cursed them. He had to beat a retreat, or, to put it plainly, take to his heels.

No policeman made his appearance—and, if one had done so, our colonist would certainly have been arrested. As for the few French citizens who witnessed the unequal encounter, they were all either factory-hands who worked side by side with Yellows, or small shopkeepers whose customers were largely Yellows. All of them joined in condemning this disturber of the peace, this uncivilised colonial from the backwoods who did not realise that, in up-to-date society, one man was as good as another, whatever his Colour, and one bank-note as colourless as the next.

We listened to the colonist's narrative with some embarrassment. We were certainly scandalised that such a thing should happen in our country; but we also felt that it was a case for action by authority, not for somebody in a temper trying to take the law into his own hands. At the same time, we were all in agreement that Parisians and

stay-at-home French people in general did not yet realise the first thing about the race-war, even while it was being carried on under their very noses, especially in connection with women.

After lunch, I went for a stroll in the Governor-General's park with a very high official in Indo-China. We talked about the story we had just heard. From it we went on to glance at several of the subjects I have developed in the course of this book, and, in particular, the bearing of the sexual question between races upon half-breeding.

"Well," said my friend, whom a lifetime in the colonial service had made an expert on this matter, "we are in a position to judge our half-breeds by their performances, now that a large number of them, the sons of French colonists in the early days of our colonisation, are grown men and work side by side with us in important posts in Africa and Asia. Usually they have got on thanks to their fathers' influence rather than their own merits. As for themselves, ***with some exceptions***, they play for their own hands. They are born fawners and intriguers, plausible, crafty, adept at taking the credit for other people's work and getting out of tight corners. Moral courage in public affairs is not their strong point. I won't say that nobody else is capable of venality; but I'm bound to say that they are to be found mixed up with almost every case of corruption and deriving private advantage from public administration. Some of them, moreover, administer regular kingdoms: I know several second-class and even first-class district commissioners who are half-breeds.

"You were talking to me the other day," the official went on, "about those grossly libellous articles which are published in certain anti-French sheets, unworthy of inclusion in the decent Press of Indo-China. You were surprised that such insults to some of the colony's best servants could be published without legal proceedings being taken, or resort to the law of libel being even threatened. Didn't I tell you: 'The magistrates won't make a move'? Well, most of the magistrates in our colonial courts have more or less of an admixture of Yellow or Black blood."

I repeat this statement just as it was made to me. I have no personal desire to vilify a body of men for whom I have every respect. In itself, being a half-breed has nothing reprehensible about it. ***It is a fault on the part of the father***, ***not a crime on the part of the child***. As for any moral failings which it may involve, inasmuch as French citizens are here concerned I should be delighted to have proof that no such failings in fact exist. All I am doing here is setting forth the opinion of a competent witness; and I eagerly await somebody who can refute it.

I recalled some men I had seen, and mentioned three of them by name.

"Do you mean to say," I asked, "that these men aren't pure Whites?"

"The first had a West Indian mother, the daughter of a Black woman and a White man. The second is of Guiana descent. The third has a dash of Comorin blood."

"Well, I should never have thought it. Their skins, their faces— why, they seemed to me as much Old French as myself!"

"I dare say. Often admixture of blood is barely perceptible. You must look at the whites of a man's eyes, the half-moons on his nails. Sometimes it's only if you happen to see him stark naked that you can detect the stigmata that give him away—some concealed blemish, next to nothing. Or you may have to refer to official records of his descent. But we colonial veterans have a flair for half-breeds; we can smell them out. And, believe me, it's generally by some trait of character, something sneaking, that a man betrays himself in uncertain cases. We've had experience, alas, and we understand at once. At home, people would never stop to think about very slight physical details; and they would attribute the man's nasty little doings to faulty upbringing, to nerves—to anything except half-breeding."

"But there are hypocrites and crooks of absolutely pure birth."

"Of course there are; and there are mulattoes who are very good fellows, sincere and unsophisticated—so much so that they are sometimes taken in and exploited by Whites. I'm talking about the majority, taking them as a whole."

"It's a very interesting fact that in some cases half-breeding is ***almost imperceptible***."

"Yes, and a very dangerous one, too. For half-breeding persists, and after several generations it may come out again overwhelmingly. Don't you remember the terrible struggle the Spaniards and the Portuguese had to carry on at home once they got an infusion of Moorish blood? It takes centuries for a country to ***digest*** such a poison and get the better of it. And how does France stand in this respect at this very moment ? ***We simply can't say***. The contamination to which we are exposed is in proportion to our native population and the number of our colonial subjects. We are forty million Whites against sixty million Coloured. Anyhow, that's better than the proportion of the Dutch to their East Indian pupils: eight million Whites against sixty million Coloured! And the coming and going between Amsterdam and Batavia dates further back and has been much freer and fuller than the coming and going between Marseilles and Saigon or Tamatavo. Besides, those robust Dutch planters, blond giants from Utrecht or Friesland, married an astonishing number of little olive-skinned Javanese girls. Their descendants went back to Europe, and half-bred around them. ***Holland is one of the modern countries most tainted by racial admixture***. You've been to Java, haven't you? Weren't people pointed out to you there with milky-white complexions and golden hair: Whites to all appearance, if there ever were Whites, but unquestionably of Malay descent?"

"Yes, I could hardly believe it. In their case the Malay imprint goes back a hundred years or more."

"They're still ***half-breeds***."

"Well, for that matter, aren't we all? Couldn't you always call somebody a Negro by comparison with somebody else paler-complexioned?"

"No doubt. But real half-breeding, in the case of an individual as in that of a nation, begins with the appearance of some stigmata, no matter how well hidden. It's the same thing with infectious diseases. We carry microbes about in us. So long as our systems neutralise them, it's just as though we didn't carry them. The danger lies in absorbing too many of them, and so giving our defensive organisms too much work to do and passing beyond the stage where we can digest them with immunity."

"And do you think that France, ***and perhaps all Europe***, are approaching that limit, beyond which the disease of half-breeding may accidentally reveal itself?"

"That's the greatest thing which people who look at the world around them have to worry about nowadays. Asia is becoming exalted and disciplined by nationalism under the mask of Sovietism, and beside her bubbles Japan, intoxicated with ambition to conquer. Africa is slowly developing a Praetorian Guard consciousness. America sees the situation; but she is already besieged and indeed invaded by the swarm of Blacks and Yellows. As for Europe, while these immense Coloured multitudes are awakening around her, what is she obsessed with? Wretched points of honour, false interests splitting up a microcosm, the crazy idea of taking revenge in mutual carnage. She is obsessed with ruinous, disastrous, fratricidal war among White nations."

"You're summing up all the nonsensicalness of international life in Europe ever since 1871, and unfortunately ever since 1918, too."

"Quite so. It isn't battles, in which brave men who have no quarrel face one another, that create and perpetuate hatred among nations. It's ***the peace treaties***, drafted

by diplomats who weren't in the trenches, of course, but just for that reason are all the more arrogant and idiotic."

"And yet how unimportant, how childish, all these manufactured quarrels and hatreds look when you judge them from here, on the edge of this immense continent of Asia and on the edge of the Eastern seas, already quivering with the first thunderclaps heralding that unparalleled storm, the Pacific war! How ironical is that word 'Pacific'!"

"Yes, but go and tell that to the Chauvinists in Germany who are shouting for revenge. Go and tell it even—I think you'll agree with me—to certain frantic patriots in France. Either of them will throw all the responsibility on the other party, and go on barking across the frontiers of our little States. I needn't specify the similarly inciting roles played by the Russians, the British, the Italians, the Poles, and other smaller nations. All of them, sincerely or insincerely, are 'hipped' on the silly subject of their own vanity, and are ready to set Europe on fire under the illusion that it will profit their own little plots of ground. It is true that we have a few 'Europeans' who bleat about humanitarianism. But as yet we have hardly anybody who really exerts himself to bring the truth home to Europe and make her one."

"It's a hard job," I murmured. "Still, it's quite clear that if Europe doesn't federate, and then join up strongly with White America and White Australia, our race will be submerged by the sexual flood of the Coloured; and the future will witness a half-breed world."

"Exactly," my friend closed the conversation, as he selected another cigar from his case. "There's no middle course. It will be one thing or the other."

II

A few years ago an American millionaire brought an action for divorce against his wife. His ground was an unusual one. He alleged that his wife's skin was not uniformly White; that she must therefore have some drops of Negro blood; that she was a mulatto, to a very slight extent, an octoroon or less, perhaps—but a mulatto she was; and that, in short, she had gravely deceived him about her birth and done him an irreparable wrong.

The plaintiff pointed out to the court how impossible it was for him, belonging as he did to a family "one hundred per cent White," to admit a "half-breed" into it, and engender through her heirs who would transmit the accursed Black strain.

The court revived a great classical tradition: that of the Phryne trial in Athens, and ordered that the incriminated spot should be submitted to its judgment.

In the end, the husband got his divorce. Among the Whites in the United States it was felt that the verdict set an excellent example.

In Europe, and above all in France, people appreciated the spicy details of the story. They laughed at this semi-public exhibition of bi-Coloured intimacy. They shrugged their shoulders and exclaimed: "Do the Americans think that they are supermen, and that Negroes are animals?"

Once more, in short, the Old World did not understand the New World.

Nevertheless, it was America which was right, at least given the existing state of peoples and the existing state of science. I am not concerned with the circumstances of this particular case.[1] I am considering the matter from the point of view of states-

[1] The story was utilised in the American film, ***Ann Carver's Profession,*** but this film, did not draw any

men, the leaders of a strong, free nation: a ***White*** nation. Is it not their present-day duty to protect their race ***against any crossing with the Coloured***, lest it should in consequence degenerate into a half-breed race?

This is an infinitely large and infinitely debatable question. Anthropologists dispute about it, contradict one another, ramble from the point. Are the half-breed (the product of a fecundation half White, half Yellow or half Red) and the mulatto (Black-White) superior or inferior to the pure White individual? Should cross-breeding be wholly condemned, or should it sometimes be extolled?

As always, Nature delights in presenting masterpieces on both sides. She keeps herself serenely above our theories.

Partisans of free sexual exchange between races can quote some examples of wonderfully fine mulattos, much more useful and attractive than their mono-racial ancestors: quadroons of genius such as Dumas and Hugo. They define human alloy as one of those hereditary contaminations which betray themselves in intellectual brilliancy or physical exquisiteness.

Their adversaries retort with any number of cases drawn from colonial history, medical pathology and criminology, by way of proving that the half-breed is an ugly or noxious product, base, limited and undependable, subject to terrible physical ills and incapable of any intellectual accomplishment.

Study of living amalgams has, nevertheless, long since led science to recognise the close cousinship of all humanity, and to envisage humanity as one and indivisible.

What, in fact, really dissociates the animal species is the ***impossibility of fecundation between them***, or at least successive fecundation. An ass and a mare will certainly produce a mule; but the mule itself remains sterile. It is only in libertine Ovid that a swan makes charming Leda pregnant, and that a bull does the same service for another lecherous lady. The centaurs, griffons and sphinxes of classical fable never lived except in the world of poets.

But ***all men***, red, brown, black, olive, hairy or smooth-skinned, perhaps even the great anthropoid ape (he keeps his ideas to himself, but certain stories of women carried off into the jungle are disturbing)—in any case, ***all men*** can fecundate any woman, be she as White as a dream. The only exceptions are the consistently sterile.

On the other hand, ever since the earliest stud-farm, people have been conscious of the danger of failing to ***renew a race***, to maintain its strength even by the most paradoxical contributions, such as crossing well-fed, highly-bred subjects with starveling wild strains.

Royal lines, by their degeneracy, have borne witness to the peril of failing to keep in contact with the earth, like Antaeus in the splendid fable, and to return for renewal to the lower orders, to the peasantry, to the poor, those paradoxical possessors of the most wonderful kind of wealth: good health. The triumph of the cosmopolitan race which arose in the United States from the leavings of Europe, as though all America had become one enormous laboratory, has illustrated the thesis that fusion is all to the good.

Here, of course, it was a question only of inter-marriage ***between Whites***: Poles and Latins, Irish and Saxons—all Aryans, with even the Semitic element excluded until recent times.

Meanwhile scientific knowledge about generation, groping during all the centuries from Lucretius's crooked atoms—which, after all, were not so ridiculous—to Buf-

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ethnological moral. On the other hand, the film, ***Imitation of Life*** presented quite seriously and with much humanity the unhappy position of a half-breed girl, apparently White, who was still consistently treated as a half-breed.

fon's animalculae, suddenly acquired a little enlightenment, thanks to patient study of mice and flies.

It was found that a black element, introduced into a white strain, might disappear entirely, and then reappear completely at the fifth or tenth remove. This even led to the deduction of an immutable law of periodicity.

This, in turn, led to presumption of the existence of colouring germs, which came into operation turn about, like links in a chain. So we came to the discovery of chromosomes, ultra-microscopic organisms in the spermatozoa and the ovum, good or bad fairies whose gifts there was no avoiding. It was either a black or a white chromosome which presided over every birth.

Hence arose the little angel's likeness to Great-uncle Arthur—or, on the contrary, the little devil's sinister blackness. Those blessed chromosomes, eloquently invoked by some skilled gynaecologist, must have saved her bacon for many a sheepish mother. The official father, momentarily taken aback by the odd appearance of his offspring, would mop his brow and respectfully assent:

"Yes, I see, Doctor. It's all because of the seventh chromosome of the fourth pair. . . . Well, really, science is a wonderful thing. . . . So it's my great-grandmother's fault if I've got a black baby!"

About 1900, after the description by Henking of these chromatic corpuscles whose existence Waldeyer had already suspected, a distinguished professor of anthropology transcended his own ignorance and declared coldly: "There are no such things as half-breeds."

This pontifical person based his verdict upon material distance, upon difference of habitation. ***This state of separation***, ***according to him***, ***sufficed to prevent coupling between human beings belonging to different continents***. In practice, it was no more possible than fecundation between animals and birds. But, since then, thirty years have drawn together, with lightning speed, all the races upon earth.

The war, flying, trade, wireless, a hundred and one factors, enormous and infinitesimal, have wiped out space and encouraged migration. The problem of races has suddenly assumed a scope, an urgency, entirely novel.

If this professor came to life again and were given a travelling scholarship around the world before being restored to his chair, he would be able to satisfy himself that half-breeds not merely exist, but indeed abound, and that they weigh extremely heavily in the scales of the future.

I repeat that what we are concerned with is ***a new problem***. We have no time, we have no right, to debate ***in vacuo***. Discussion about the past matters little to us. Was there one Genesis, or several? Did all Colours, all races issue from one and the same cradle, somewhere in Asia? All this is otiose. Our problem is that of to-day, and still more of to-morrow.

All at once, we find ourselves in sight of ***a half-breed world***. No race has any assurance that it will remain recognisable. The peril which Charles Martel averted when he stopped the advance of the Moors at Poitiers has come to life again, a hundredfold greater, on a world-wide scale, thanks to the re-echoing renown of the White woman.

Let us try to remain impartial. Let us ignore whatever personal pain we may feel at the mere idea of an invasion, ***worse than foreign***, of all our patrimony, all our heritage: an invasion by races opposite to our own, from the colour of their skins to the mechanism of their minds and even their myths; races which have behind them not Kronos and Jehovah, but Yin and Yang, or some shadowy demon. You may tell me, if you like, that all these symbols are fundamentally identical. Perhaps; but they have

borne harvests which are totally distinct. Besides, we possess that unique flower of ours: Christianity.

But, I repeat, let us ignore the close linking of all our affections with ***what is like us***.

What is the highest good? Whither is humanity as a whole going? If it is bound for an ideal of perfection, and not for frustration, has such an ideal already been set up by a superior race: the White race?

Or, on the other hand, is the overture being played to a triumphant symphony of every shade of Colour? Is the way being paved for a pooling of all our hereditary treasures? Is every clime, from the Tropics to the Poles, offering its own wonderful gifts towards the erection of the polychrome statue of the Man of the Future: ***the inhabitant of the whole world***?

There is no denying that, if the present process of evolution of the planet on which we live is not interrupted by a fresh relapse into barbarism, very soon all mankind will be perpetually on the move. How long will it take to get from Paris to Pekin, in express planes flying in the stratosphere? A few hours, or even a few minutes. . . .

Then we shall all acquire a taste, a habit, a liking for such travelling made easy. For it is pleasant to have a change; and it is very good for you, too.

Even in our own times, when you are exiled from your own country, when you have to stay ***somewhere else***, whether you are happy or unhappy, whether you are enjoying yourself or striving and suffering, you are at least living on this other soil; and, despite yourself, you come to love it like a borrowed fatherland.

Such is the law of the human heart. We love life, ***we love ourselves***, whether we see a bright reflection or a dark shadow of ourselves, wherever we happen to be in the world.

Even if she is grudging to us, even if she is unkind to us, by now all the Earth is a near relation of ours. If we still hate any of her continents, any of her oceans, it is only because we are not yet familiar with them. It is only because we cannot yet get into communion with all these manifestations of her and experience her kisses and her kicks there. It is only because we cannot yet come and go at our ease, as everybody may be able to do to-morrow.

An American who has been in France does not hate France: he has lived there. A Frenchman who has been in Germany—even in one of her frightful reprisal camps—can no longer really hate, deep down in himself, that country where there is a sky, where there are trees, where there is eating and sleeping, ***where a man may live***.

It would, of course, be presumptuous to judge the work of Nature by our measure and, in particular, by our standard of time.

Even if observations extending over five hundred successive generations led us to regard a certain kind of cross-breeding as utterly disastrous, how can we tell whether the thousandth birth might not mark the beginning of progress—but progress too slow for our impatience ?

We are in the presence of Nature, that prodigal enchantress, who strews the seas with trillions of superfluous eggs so that one fish may swim, and who scatters pollen to the four winds of heaven.

We are in the presence of Nature: we, with our short-sighted eyes, our grasping affections, our incurable fear as mortals, who are deaf to the eternal song of the electrons in our blood and the spheres in the infinity of space.

What can one say that would not sound childish?

Nevertheless, we have to live as practical men.

Nature is maternal, but she is also ferocious; and our ancestors were not able to put up with her as they found her.

Or, at least, they were not satisfied with her in the raw, with the fruits she produced in the state of barbarism. An instinct still natural—the instinct for order, strengthened by the beauty of woman—taught them to civilise themselves. We succeed them along the path of progress.

We are like players in the middle of a game that goes on for ages and ages. We cannot suddenly pick up our winnings and stop playing. We cannot get out of this great game.

What then? Must we not leave it to Fate, higher than ourselves, to punish our successors, if our predecessors were mistaken and if we aggravate their error by persisting in what they believed, and what I still believe, to be the path of reason, the path of right, the path of duty, the path of prudence?

We have to steer by dead reckoning; but one fact dominates our horizon.

There are human races of different Colours.

There is a White race.

The White race once imposed its military supremacy upon the whole world. It now imposes upon the whole world the superiority of its women in the sphere of aesthetics.

The White race has behaved in the past, and behaves still more in this second phase, ***as though it were really the ideal race***.

In practice, there is no doubt that it is the ideal race. Its demonstration of its superiority through letters and the arts, through fashion, through love, through Woman, is much more decisive than its demonstration of its superiority through guns; for economics and force are only ***consequences*** of the exalting power of Venus.

Until yesterday, the White race enjoyed, in the eyes of other races, the prestige of being composed of supermen. ***To-day its apotheosis is coming to an end***; and, at the same time, its finest flower, its chief treasure, its femininity, fires with desire, intellectual and physical, the Yellows, the Blacks, all the Coloured, even in cities hitherto hermetically sealed against foreign influence, even in the remotest islands of the seven seas.

The White race is the chosen race; and it is ***our race***.

We must dismiss our philosophical doubts as impious, and bestir ourselves to defend it ***now***, before it is too late.

III

Very luckily for ourselves, for the purposes of defending it we have not to rely only on men, acting separately or together.

There are also women: ***White women***, who are concerned in this question to the highest degree. They possess equal authority, individual or collective, since they are, in fact, the mistresses, the queens of our whole world.

After all, it is for them, in the last resort, to pronounce their verdict upon the sexual invasion by the Coloured races. Do they want to be conquered, or do they not? Do they want to be forced to engender "the polychrome statue," or do they want to remain the mothers of White children?

It is for them to say.

Feminine clubs in America, which are as powerful and wealthy as men's clubs; feminine associations in Europe, religious, patriotic, charitable, sporting, literary—

here is a large new item for you to add to your programmes. In what should you take a passionate interest, if not in the struggle in which, at this very moment, ***there is beginning to be staked the fate of the White woman***?

It is for you women, you idols to whom we all bow down, to arouse the associations of your menfolk, to sound the alarm-signal in every home. It is for you to inaugurate that White League which ought to be formed, with the object of securing that, despite all difficulties human and material, despite all selfishness, all treachery, all foolishness, the White race should become cross-bred, if at all, only to such an extent as will make it an ideal super-race.

It should be the purpose of such a League to spare any human being the shame of those stigmata, either of complexion or of character, which betray ***bad cross-breeding***.

This is a task which calls not only for determination and tact. It also calls for feeling, for sympathy.

Only woman can succeed in such a task. It is upon them that we must count.

In fact—and I am not here straying into the realm of poetry—it is ***the genius of the heart*** which can build the most realistic, the most impassable barrier between members of opposite sexes who can never make a success of marriage with one another. The great science which will have the last word in the race-war will be ***a science of love***.

All over the world, at the present moment, human beings are terribly in need of such a science.

Sex is their general motive power. Sex creates them, sex exalts them, sex destroys them; but they know no more about its essential nature than they do about the essential nature of electricity. Moreover, they do not even know how to use it, whereas they do know how to make electrical machinery.

They possess no tried and tested system of choosing one another before they marry. They have no knowledge of the law of complete harmony in love, body and soul, passion and affection: the law of all married happiness, of all fine fecundation, the great law of eugenics.

To this very day, in all countries, civilised or uncivilised, very few people are ***really married***: that is to say, harmoniously united because their natures predestined them to form one whole together.

In such cases they have come together by chance. But they will stay together until they die. They will not look elsewhere. They have attained perfect monogamy, ***natural*** monogamy.

All other couples, whether they are officially registered as married or not, are badly married, falsely married, pseudo-couples. They thought they suited one another, and experience has disabused them of the idea. They do not suit one another ***completely***. So they writhe in the chains which have been forged for them by their families, by the law, and also by their own blindness. They seek to escape from their servitude or find some compensation for it. Hence arises all polygamy.

Polygamous also, for lack of permanent partners, are those men who figure on our registers as bachelors or divorced. All debauchery is never anything more than a substitute. Don Juan himself would like to find the woman who could keep him faithful to her. ***Such a woman exists***—a woman to suit the greatest libertine in the world, just as a woman exists to suit the shyest and most sentimental of men.

For every man alive, Nature, which is logical and benevolent, is bound to have created ***a replica*** of the opposite sex, his predestined mate, who awaits him and will

find such joy in union with him that she will never be tempted to turn to any other man. For every woman alive, her predestined mate similarly exists.

The children they produce will be perfect children. The ideal kind of cross-breeding is that which they accomplish by the conjunction of their chromosomes. The solution of the racial problem is to be found between them and nowhere else.

The sole problem is that of getting them to meet, getting them to recognise one another, getting them to mate.

Modern life, in proportion as it leads people to move about more frequently and more rapidly, should facilitate and multiply such meetings, such true matings. The secret of the unsettlement of modern life, which astonishes us so much, is perhaps to be found, quite simply, in the instinct of every unsatisfied person on earth to look for his or her mate.

Some day, perhaps, biologists will be able to identify, by analysis of the blood, the index which will enable everybody to find his or her proper partner, identical or complementary.

The last word in all human speculation lies in this search and its satisfaction.

IV

During our present period of ignorance, all that we can hope for, all that we can extol, are palliatives.

So, while we await the true ***science of love***, let us aim at the widest possible propagation of our existing semi-science, quite experimental and conjectural though it may be.

Let White men be so educated that, even though the marriages between them be but imperfect, they may treat their White wives in their sexual relations with tact and skill; and that thus these White wives may not become disgusted with their own race or ever take it into their heads to try Coloured lovers.

Let our men of letters and the arts, and our film producers, all our "excitation factory," moderate their fearful propaganda on behalf of the White woman in Coloured countries. At the same time, let another kind of propaganda—tactful, intelligent propaganda—be carried on ***among Coloured women***, who are already seeking to preserve their attraction by becoming fake-White woman. Let us teach them a better way of being charming, and so keeping, or recovering, the desire of their own menfolk.

Such seems to me to be in the sphere of sex, both physical and aesthetic, the line of defence of the White race.

In the sphere of ***politics***, defence of the White race consists in making peace among the nations belonging to it and federating them as closely as possible.

It consists also in reforming the States belonging to the White race, by borrowing from the different doctrines which are capable of adaptation to modern life.

The pure democratic principle is bankrupt; and so is the mystical idea of legality.

We have overthrown all our purely hereditary aristocracies which depended on so-called "divine right." At the same time, we despise our new aristocracies of wealth, which may be less hermetically sealed, but are also much less aristocratic than their predecessors. But we still feel that ***we need an aristocracy***.

Upon what will the aristocracy of to-morrow be based?

Will it be once more upon force, as it was in feudal days? Will it be upon banditry, as the gangsters would lead us to think? Or will it be upon learning, as Renan would have it ?

The answer remains a mystery. But ***some kind of aristocracy there will certainly be***. And this aristocracy will establish a code of law, a custom of privilege, for itself: a code of law other than the strict justice of the Jacobins, which our jurisprudents have managed to turn into an iniquity; and something other than the magic of money, which our financiers have turned into a dishonour.

The code of this aristocracy of the future may perhaps draw, at one and the same time, upon present-day Americanism; and upon Bolshevism, where certain social innovations are concerned (the ***bourgeois*** idea of the family, for example, is falling to pieces of itself, for it is out of date in this age of movement); and also upon Fascism, in so far as that doctrine is ***imperial***, but not imperialistic. Over high politics still hover Augustus and Napoleon.

The aristocracy of to-morrow in the White countries will be international. It will revive the Roman Empire which Rome failed to hold. It will secure respect thanks to some quality of character, some kind of nobility, which may be merely intellectual, but will probably also be religious.

V

Now let me endeavour finally to sum up this vast subject.

From everything I have studied in this book, ***one great factor***, ***one new factor***, emerges; and its application is world-wide.

The Coloured men have discovered the White woman; and apparently they attribute to her some kind of superiority.

Such is ***the share of the Coloured*** in the immense process which we have examined. Whatever may be the attitude of the Whites, ***this factor exists***.

Whence, how and why has this new factor, intellectual and social, arisen?

Whither is it going to lead us?

That the Coloured races should proclaim their admiration of White skin is not in itself anything novel. Such was the instinctive feeling of those old-time Negro chiefs who ate the first White travellers that fell into their hands, in the belief that they would thus appropriate to themselves this wonderful quality of the epidermis. Such was the feeling of the sculptor of that centuries' old Bali mask, exhibited in the Batavia museum, which reminds one of ***La Joconde***. Such was the feeling of those bygone artists who laid down the rules for the dances of the Javanese princesses many centuries ago, and made them daub their faces white—just as the ***geishas*** of Japan still do for the "tea-ceremony." Any number of similar examples might be quoted.

But what is new is the imitation among the Coloured races of ***the White woman***, not merely in her physical appearance, but in everything special to herself which she possesses, from her complexion to her clothes, her mentality and even her vices.

How are we to explain ***this***?

Is it simply because the White woman is the female of the race which has hitherto been the master-race?

Or is it, on the contrary, because she really incarnates a higher kind of femininity?

In any case, it is an outstanding fact, of the first importance for ***all*** humanity.

It is one of the greatest happenings in history.

Hitherto, in fact, only happenings of a ***religious kind*** have exercised a worldwide influence.

If we neglect the very limited influence of Buddhism and Islam in Europe and America, we may, indeed, say that ***there has only been one such happening*** in the past: the prodigious diffusion of the doctrine expressed in the Old and the New Testaments, in the Judeo-Christian Bible.

May not the present apotheosis of the White woman be regarded as also possessing a religious character—or, rather, an idolatrous character? And may we not find in that character the deepest significance of what is in progress?

All over the world the traveller finds nowadays young men of the Yellow, Brown and Black races, pure or half-breeds, who at one and the same time rejoice in and suffer from an amorous desire hitherto unknown to them.

These youths—to whom may be added millions of middle-aged men and even old men—have acquired a curiosity about White women, a desire for them, a passion for them.

Whether they merely dream about such conquests, or whether they have already had at least one experience of them, they devote themselves to this passion of theirs with a determination which sometimes goes the length of mania and crime.

That all these Coloured men all over the world should now be thinking about the White woman, and conveying the impression that they regard her as desirable before all other women—is not this the true explanation of that tendency I have just mentioned: that Coloured women are trying to look like White women?

These "fake-White" women, in short, are merely acting in obedience to the taste of the menfolk of their races.

It is to these men, therefore, that we must look for the explanation of this peculiar process of evolution.

I am quite prepared to admit that Coloured women possess in themselves as many resources as White women for attracting and dominating men, especially where the men of their own race are concerned. But like these men, they find themselves at present in a phase of human history which places them in an unquestionable position of inferiority.

Do these Yellow men, these Brown men, these Black men prefer the White woman from sheer caprice, or from desire to be in the fashion; and, in preferring her, are they going against their true natures?

Or have they really a predilection for her?

Be this as it may, the fact remains that they desire her, and that they beckon to her. If they cannot obtain her in any better way, they buy her when they can, as a prostitute.

The study which we have just made, in fact, throws a flood of fresh light upon that stereotyped phrase: "the White slave traffic."

It is only too evident that it is precisely ***because they are White women*** that its victims are sold at a high price; and, ***even in South America***, on the notorious Buenos Ayres "round," documentary evidence proves the large number of their half-breed or wholly Coloured clients. The "White slave traffic," in short, means ***the prostitution of White women for Coloured men***.

Why this preference in mercenary love? Is it simply curiosity about foreign women, comparable with the curiosity of White men about Coloured women, or that of Coloured women about White colonials

Here we have another problem; and I do not flatter myself that I have entirely solved it.

The fact remains: all over the world, the White woman is ***summoned*** at the demand of Coloured men, who pay for her debauchery.

This prostitution of White women may indicate merely a caprice on the part of the Coloured men who patronise them.

It involves an element of necessity, which, at the same time, excludes any idea of attraction on the part of the victim towards her Coloured clients.

But we must go deeper into the question. Unhappily, we have plenty of examples both of Coloured men feeling so strong a passion for White women that they marry them, and of White women being strangely, almost inevitably drawn towards Coloured men.

These ***marriages*** usually end in brutal disillusionment. There are any number of painful or dramatic divorce cases in which such imprudent White women become involved.

Is there an inflexible law of Nature, which will not tolerate discordant unions, and punishes such mistakes with ridicule or suffering?

Next we come to the most pathetic element in this discussion: the child.

The ardent ambition of the Coloured is ***to have children*** closer than themselves to the White race.

The question of mixed fecundation remains a mystery. What exactly does cross-breeding involve? Is there such a thing as favourable cross-breeding? Or is all cross-breeding to be condemned, because it develops solely the defects of the two races concerned?

Now let us turn to the share of culpability of the Whites themselves.

I cannot go along a road anywhere in the world without seeing everywhere specimens of the art of the Whites in the form of commercial advertising: in other words, ***a world-wide propaganda in favour of the charm of the White woman***.

From all this advertising may be deduced this equally world-wide conclusion: the White woman represents, for the White man, the symbol of perfection, not only physically, but also in the sphere of art and the sphere of ideas.

Perhaps the White man is entitled to believe this—if it is not, on the other hand, sheer blasphemy. But does the White man realise that he is ***shouting*** it to the whole world?

So he is shouting it to the Coloured races. . . .

This shout reaches the ears of all the men in the world.

Bear that in mind, you film-producers, you artists, you writers, you ***White men***! Yet you are legitimately touchy about the honour of your wives, are you not?

Such is what, on your own initiative, in a “business” spirit or from sheer heedlessness, you are putting into the minds of your new rivals, Coloured men.

This in itself serves to explain—by the folly, by the error, by the sin of White men—many of the revolting facts noted in this book.

Only one religion, Christianity, has given birth to a civilisation which favours individuality, personality, the sacredness of the soul.

According to pure Christian doctrine, this gift is shared by the man and ***by the woman***.

Hence arose the creation of a feminine type absolutely unique in human history. She is the White woman. . . .

The era of ***chivalry***, followed by the age of romanticism, exalted her personality to the point of sublimity.

She was deified—because she was credited with extraordinary virtues.

She became, in our minds, Woman: a sacrosanct, superhuman being.

To-day, we know very well that much of this is, indeed, "romancing."

But ***an instinct***, as much as tradition, still profoundly convinces us that it ***ought to be*** true, and that the homage we pay woman, the sacrifices we make for her, ***ought to be*** deserved by such sublimity.

Hence arises all that inspires our idea of love, our idea of marriage, our idea of reverencing our mothers and our sisters.

We do not allow Woman to be insulted in our presence.

We do not admit that she should be dishonoured. Yet only too often we help her to dishonour herself.

In fact, the White woman has followed in modern life the process of evolution of the man of her own race.

She, like him, is overloaded, overwhelmed with superfluous belongings. She, like him, is restless, sceptical and addicted to "escapes."

And, into the bargain, she is more ***idle*** than he is.

Accordingly, her weaker nerves go to pieces more easily, and she suffers terribly from the destructive effects of an anti-natural existence.

To sum up, the White woman—of course, with some exceptions—is a prey to a physical, intellectual and social crisis without precedent.

She is bored.

She feels that she is "out of a job."

Doubtless she preserves within herself the great secret, the undying flame which was bestowed upon her predecessors by way of justifying her elevation to the ideal type. . . .

But she does everything she can to forget it, and to make those around her forget it.

She follows, or even goes beyond the White man in all his errors in the course of the life they share in common. Let us glance at the kind of life it is.

The world of hypocrisy and pretence which Carlyle denounced—in ***Hero-worship***, for example—has become only the more festering during the past century, under the tyranny of money and the fear of war.

Various myths have been created among the Whites: the nation . . . the race . . . dictatorship . . . communism. . . .

None of them has imposed itself sufficiently to win the adherence of all Whites; and at the same time Christian idealism has degenerated into pure ceremonial.

Hence arises the present-day exaltation of Woman, in a world of selfish, cut-throat competition. Hence, too, arise the monetary crisis, and the progressive danger of racial invasion.

The Whites are conscious that their whole world is on a slippery slope. They have not managed wholly to forget the rule of truth which was entrusted to them.

But forces stronger, it seems, than their own volition paralyse them and carry them along.

Among these forces is to be found ***an ethnical element***. The Whites feel that they lack union and unity. In fact, their disturbed history has been that of ***several White tribes***, not yet unified to this very day.

Modern ethnologists—Lothrop Stoddard, for example—draw a distinction between ***different kinds of Whites***, now intermingled in Europe and America. The Nordics, the maritime Mediterraneans, the Peasants of Central Europe and the Mountaineers have preserved their characteristics for thousands of years, however far afield they emigrated.

(Similarly, for that matter, the Yellows, the Browns and the Blacks comprise several clearly distinct categories: hence the justification of the caste system.)

The idea of the equality of all human beings has produced infinite disorder among these Whites, whose qualities and failings are in fact very unequally distributed.

The process of mixture which has operated among all the Whites, and the capacity for attaining the highest rank in society with which all of them are almost everywhere credited, have lowered the general standard of the White race.

White women belonging to inferior and impure tribes are naturally attracted towards Coloured men: such women, and no others. But such women are curiously called "White women."

Through these women, cross-breeding is becoming frequent, normal, almost inevitable. In the eyes of some dilettantes, it even ranks as a kind of ideal.

Nothing so contrary to the destiny of humanity has ever been conceived by the Whites, those lords of the world.

All that every living White carries within him, as the result of a very slow, very delicate process of selection—all this is surrendered to chance, to casual caprice. . . .

At the same time, all the activities of the Whites of our time are obviously dedicated to the worship of this new idol, the White woman. Nowadays, however, she is no longer regarded as the Lady of the time of chivalry, the image of heroic virtue. She is regarded as a doll—but a doll insatiable and cruel.

It is scarcely too much to say that to the White woman of this kind belong all the traits of the Beast of the Apocalypse.

The greatest sin of the Whites has been their adoration of such a monster.

It is their punishment that to-day the greatest dangers which have ever threatened the Whites spring from the desire of men of all the other Colours, lured by the scandalous sheen of the White Idol.

The first of these dangers is that of ***Coloured invasion of White territory***.

The historic domain of the Whites includes regions with a highly advanced industrialism, such as the United States, Great Britain and Germany, or with a particularly pleasant climate, such as France, Italy, Spain, California and Florida.

In this territory, enriched by age-long human effort, and, above all, in its great ports and its capitals, a quiet, peaceful penetration is already in progress: a colonisation the wrong way round by Yellows, Browns and Blacks.

Warlike invasion is a menace farther in the future. But we have already had more than one forewarning of it; and the lure of the White woman will certainly bring it to pass.

The White woman has become the symbol of omnipotence all over the world. To him who possesses her all other things seemed destined . . . unless she eats them all up first.

The next of these dangers is that of ***Coloured invasion of White blood***.

This danger of cross-breeding—a process already accomplished among the different branches of the White race itself, in their complete ignorance of any doctrine of selection and racial improvement—is a much more essential danger.

The Coloured can never become Whites. . . .

Their descendents can never become pure Whites. . . .

Hence arises that idea which lies deep down in the back of the minds of the Coloured: the elimination of the White race through a worldwide, an enforced process of cross-breeding.

Such is the "Great Plot": one of the destructive dreams patiently pursued by the "Dragon," that symbol of the secret union of the Coloured against us Whites.

No more White race. . . . It would mean cutting off the head of the whole human race.

For, despite its existing admixture, the White race remains the greatest race.

It remains the heir of beauty, of genius, of the scientific method. It remains the heir of a Dogma with which nothing in history can compete.

But it has fallen into idolatry of Woman.

And so, are the Yellow sectaries of Caodaism, the Black sectaries of Haitian neo-Voodooism, to dispossess it of its supremacy?

What are we going to do about all this?

There is the Russian remedy.

In Moscow they told me: "The cure for racial mixture is complete mixture."

One single class, one single race: the polychrome statue of humanity!

It is an attractive dream; but it could come true in a hurry only at the cost of an immediate catastrophe.

It would mean a fresh invasion by the Barbarians, the ruin of everything we have slowly created in the course of centuries.

Every race represents a process of achievement; and it will take many another century before every race can slowly merge into one supreme synthesis.

Then there is the German remedy.

In Berlin they told me: "Pure racialism! The Aryan-Germans, and nobody else!"

This solution is equally impossible. It is a dream—and an iniquitous dream.

Any such "purification" of the White race—we have already seen what a mixture this White race really is—would mean the destruction of an age-long process of adaptation, of alloy, of alliance.

Then is there anything to be done?

Is a joint solution by Great Britain, by the United States, by France, by the Latin world conceivable?

Yes, it certainly is.

The most rational nations; and at the same time the nations which wield the greatest power and possess the largest colonial sphere; and at the same time the nations which represent diversity among the White tribes—these nations must lay down ***a doctrine of moderation*** and see that it prevails.

It is ***through Woman*** that such a doctrine must be sought—and also through really religious men.

The primary clause of this doctrine must clearly be a reversion by the White woman to humility—by which I mean a proud, militant, heroic humility, like that of the Ladies of chivalry.

It is for the White woman to be more mindful of her heritage of idealism, and to impose respect for her upon the Coloured peoples.

For my part, I believe in her.

I believe that, with the help of that wonderful Christian creed: "The weaker shall become the stronger," she will save us: she through whom we are in such danger.

Upon the enigma of her future attitude towards the Coloured men depends life or death for my White race, for my French tribe in particular, and for all the past and all the present that are so dear to me.

May what I have written here help towards the longer flowering in Earth's garden of that lovely sheaf of lilies and roses: the twofold glory—glory of mind, glory of body—of White women!

Africa, Asia, America, Oceania, Europe.
1927–1936.